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Catherine Mary Antony, Catherine Mary Antony Woodcock

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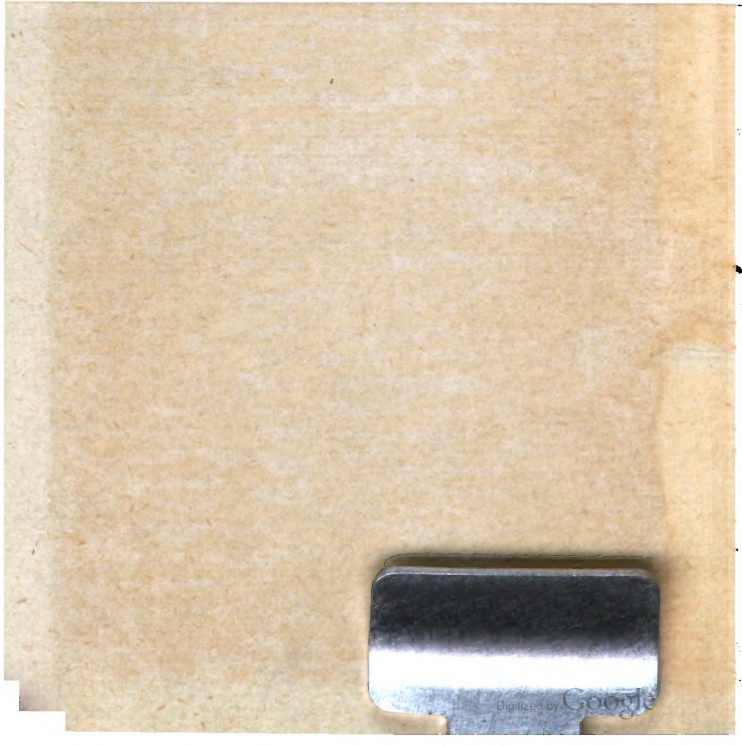
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THE MIRACLE-WORKER

1195-1231

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THE MIRACLE-WORKER
(1195-1231)

BY

C. M. ANTONY

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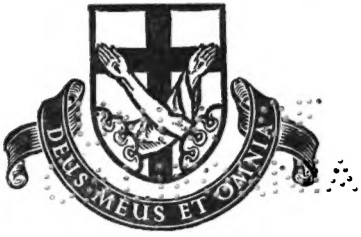

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TO

FR. RAYMOND GISCARD, O.F.M.

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INTRODUCTORY.

"*Sancti Antonii de Padua Vitae Duae, quarum altera hucusque inedita.*" Edidit notis et commentario illustravit, Léon de Kerval. (Paris: Librairie Fischbacher, 1904.)[1]

"*L'évolution et le développement du merveilleux dans les légendes de St. Antoine de Padoue,*" par Léon de Kerval. (Paris: Librairie Fischbacher, 1906.)

"*St. Antoine de Padoue,* 1195-1231," par M. l'Abbé Albert Lepitre. (4me Édition. Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1905. Collection: "Les Saints".)

"*St. Antoine de Padoue, Thaumaturge Franciscain,*" par P. Nicolas Dal Gal, O.F.M.; traduit de l'italien par le P. Théobald Aumasson, O.F.M., de la province Saint-Louis en Aquitaine. (Rome: 12 Via Giusti, 1907.)

"*St. Antoine de Padoue, d'après les documents primitifs,*" par P. Léopold de Chérancé, O.S.F.C. (Paris: Poussielgue, 1906.)

"*The Life of St. Antony of Padua,*" by Jean Rigauld, Friar Minor and Bishop of Treguier; translated into English by an English Franciscan. (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1904.)

THE Life of St. Antony of Padua is extraordinarily difficult to write for two reasons; the first of which is that it has so long been shrouded in the mists of legend that without critical study and a remorseless process of exclusion it is impossible to arrive at the real facts of his history. It is

[1] Critical edition of original documents.

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obvious at the outset that this process, involving as it does the testing of all known facts, especially miraculous facts, by the original thirteenth century documents, will be to many extremely painful, as by this means many of the more familiar stories of our Saint are relegated to the realm of legend. At the same time all true lovers of the Saint of Miracles must rejoice to see the tinsel of tradition, as unnecessary as useless, stripped from the golden reality of his noble life.

So far we have but one critical life of St. Antony in English,[1] though of "pious" lives we have a large number. The first thing required of a biography which cannot for lack of material contain the whole truth is that it shall at least contain nothing but the truth. In studying history we need facts; in hagiography we need to study both history and tradition, for we cannot completely understand the character of a Saint, his psychology, his cult, his popularity, if we neglect at least to glance at legend, however apocryphal. Legends have their own beauty and their own use, but they are manifestly dangerous, for not only do they prevent us from forming a clear image of the personality of the Saint by shrouding his figure in a hazy mist of unreality, but there is no doubt that this same deceptive mist of legend is very often mistaken for actual miraculous fact, even by well-instructed Catholics. And St. Antony's glorious reputation

[1] The translation of Canon Lepitre's "*St. Antoine*" in Joly's Series. That of P. Chérancé's admirable biography, valuable as it is, cannot claim in the final sense of the word to be called "critical".

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as the greatest of the *Thaumaturgi* does not depend upon tradition!

It is only recently that this truth has been realized. But between the mediaeval hagiographers who, in the look-out for that which should edify, scarcely seem to have thought anything worth chronicling but miracles, and those modern critics who, seeking above all to understand the psychology of the man, to study his history and his historical environment, his personal character and his individuality, rightly consider miracles merely as signs by which Almighty God is pleased to reveal Himself through His servant, a great gulf is fixed. M. Henri Joly's unique series, "*Les Saints*"—a translation of which is being gradually made for the benefit of English readers—exactly exemplifies this process.[1] One of these books, the masterly monograph by Canon Albert Lepitre, is, so far, the final word on St. Antony.

There is another side to the question. As the greatest living Catholic critic of Franciscan history, M. Léon de Kerval tells us, many of the Antonian legends are not only obviously improbable, but historically impossible. In the extremely interesting pamphlet mentioned above ("The Evolution and Development," etc.) he points out with what seems at first remorseless cruelty how legends are not only developed but actually invented, and being repeated from century to century gain fresh detail

[1] See "*La Psychologie des Saints*" (Henri Joly) in that series.

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with every telling. He instances (*a*) love of the marvellous, making a miracle out of a plain story: e.g. the interview with Ezzelino; (*b*) accentuation of the miraculous, with addition of details: e.g. the Apparition of St. Francis at Arles, and the Limoges novice, the legends as to which it has been impossible to quote; (*c*) the doubling and even trebling a miracle: e.g. the bilocation at Limoges, later declared also to have taken place at Montpellier; (*d*) the attributing to a Saint miracles which are known to have been wrought by another: e.g. the legend of the woman who heard the sermon at a great distance, related by Salimbene of Brother Berthold of Germany, a celebrated preacher, in the thirteenth century, but which is first connected with St. Antony by the legend "*Benignitas*," written in the fourteenth century. The task of separating legend from miracle is as important as that of dividing tares from wheat.[1]

It may be asked how this is to be done? M. de Kerval, to whose kind and courteous advice the writer of this book is greatly indebted, says—voicing the recognized body of Franciscan critics: only by adhering to thirteenth century documents, and rejecting as mere tradition, possibly true but still unproven, all MSS., *Legendæ*, and biographies of the fourteenth and succeeding centuries. Some of the best known pious stories about St. Antony date

[1] In referring to "*Legenda Prima*," the legend "*Benignitas*," etc., it must be remembered that the word in this sense simply means a history, which may or may not contain both miracle and tradition, *Historia legenda*.

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from the eighteenth century! After the thirteenth century legend begins to creep in, and each succeeding age makes the case more hopeless! This is not history. Between the great German Protestant critic (Dr. Edward Lempp), who attempts to prove out of St. Antony's own mouth, [1] that the Miracle-worker wrought no miracles at all, and those who would accept blindly the most extravagant traditions, there is a middle way of reasoned criticism in which lies safety, and this, walking in the footsteps of Canon Lepitre and M. de Kerval, we have endeavoured to follow.

But it must be remembered that at any time by the fresh discovery of a thirteenth century MS.; such as that by P. Ferdinand d'Araules, O.F.M., at Bordeaux, of the priceless legend of Jean Rigauld, many fresh details may be added to the comparatively little we certainly know as to St. Antony's life; and much which we are at present perforce obliged to consider as legend may be duly authenticated. It is sincerely to be desired that such discoveries may be made, as it is quite possible they may. But for the present, as far as the material goes which we already possess, Antonian studies are at a standstill.

The thirteenth century documents relating to St. Antony are after all very few. The principal are:

1. The *Legenda Prima*, written by an unknown Friar Minor, shortly after the canonization (30 May, 1232) cf. "Duae Vitae," pp. 5, 8.

[1] Quoting from a Sermon.

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2. The *Legenda Secunda*, written by Julien de Spire before 1264. From this the Office of the Saint is chiefly taken. It is practically the same as the *Legenda Prima*, with the addition of the Story of the Chapter at Arles.

3. The *Legenda altera*, sometimes called *Legenda Raymondina*, on account of its probable author, written shortly after 1293. It is very incomplete, but affirms strongly the fact of St. Antony's priesthood before he entered the Franciscan Order.

4. The *Legend of Jean Rigauld*, a most important MS. by the Franciscan Bishop of Tréguier, discovered, translated into French, and published in 1899 by P. Ferdinand d'Araules, and translated into English by an English Franciscan Father. (C.T.S., 3d.) This legend should be known by all lovers of St. Antony. It is by far the most interesting document on the Saint we possess, and was written towards the close of the thirteenth century.[1]

5. The *Legenda Fiorentina*, a résumé of the *Legenda Secunda*, and possibly fourteenth century.

There is also passing mention of the Saint in the histories of Vincent de Beauvais (1264), Rolandino (1260), and Bartholomew of Trent, who died during the first half of the thirteenth century.

He is also mentioned once or twice by Eccleston and Salimbene, and once by Thomas of Celano and St. Bonaventure.[2]

[1] It is from the admirable English translation that the many quotations made throughout this book are taken.

[2] We have also the Bull of Canonization, and the Office of the Saint.

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It will be seen that the material is not extensive, but we have at least enough to sketch the outline of our Saint's life, to fill in a good many details, and to authenticate a large number of miracles. And here the second difficulty comes in. For this material has been used to such excellent purpose by one or two French and Italian critical writers, of whom the first is undoubtedly Canon Lepitre, that all that can possibly be said about St. Antony has already been said by them! Any biography on the lines already indicated must of necessity follow them so closely as to run some risk of incurring the charge of plagiarism!

The present volume, however, has been written after close study of these monographs by experts, of contemporary history, and of critical editions of the original documents, for it is on these last, after all, that we must chiefly rely. For this reason they are quoted whenever possible, especially when it is a case of the *ipsissima verba* of the Saint.

It has been found impossible, within the limits of this volume, to give any account of the cult of St. Antony throughout the centuries; to mention any miracles later than those attested at his canonization; or to insert a large number of legends, among them that of the Apparition of Our Lady to St. Antony on the Vigil of the Assumption.

The writer's sincerest thanks are due to six Franciscan Fathers in France, Italy, and England, whose practical help has been as invaluable as their kindness and sympathy have been unfailing.

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Among these must be specially named Father Raymond Giscard of Brive, and Father Michael Bihl, O.F.M., of St. Bonaventure's College, Quaracchi, Florence, who has kindly revised the historical chapters, and who translated that sermon of St. Antony, which, slightly adapted, will be found in the Appendix.

In these days of unrest and political upheaval, when country after country, in the name of freedom, is steadily, if stealthily, persecuting the Catholic Church, it is surely the intercession of St. Antony, the sweet Saint who comes down to us through the ages with the Babe of Bethlehem in his arms, which we may most confidently invoke. For as the Saints are not mere spectators of the great combat going on below, but are fighting with us and for us still, and seeing, as we cannot see, the end of the struggle, so it is not likely that he who was so closely connected with the three countries now passing, or about to pass, through a great crisis should be insensible to their needs.

It is the Miracle-worker, then, who is pre-eminently the Saint of to-day. It is to him that we may cry, with fullest confidence in his will and in his power to help: "St. Antony, save Portugal,—save Italy,—above all, save France!"

C. M. ANTONY.

FIRENZE,
Quinquagesima Sunday, 1911.

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CHAPTER I.

(1195–1220.)

"*O SIDUS HISPANIÆ.*"[1]

ANTONY the Miracle-worker was born in 1195 at Lisbon, a town situated, says the "Legenda Prima," "at the uttermost end of the earth". He was the eldest son of parents young, noble, and wealthy, "just before the Lord and scrupulous observers of His commandments," but whose name and lineage are unknown. They dwelt in a palace near the great Cathedral dedicated to Our Lady, which contained a shrine venerated throughout Portugal—that of St. Vincent, Martyr. Here the Saint was baptized when eight days old (according to national custom), receiving the name of Fernando. Here, tradition tells us, his mother, yet in the flower of her youth, offered her little son to the Mother of God, who "watched over his first steps in holiness, and throughout his life stretched her hand over him in blessing". "From his earliest years he had

[1] "Hispania" would include the whole Iberian Peninsula, i.e. Spain and Portugal. The invocation is from the antiphon composed by Cardinal Guy de Montfort, 1350. Literally, of course, the true "Star of Spain" was St. Dominic.

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[Her] for his mistress and instructress, and as we shall see, for his powerful protectress during his life and at the hour of his death."[1] Devotion to Our Lady was from the beginning the mainspring of Fernando's holy life.

Of his earliest years not a single detail remains to us, but when he was 7, Fernando was sent to the Cathedral School. It is interesting to note that during the fifty years of the existence of Portugal as a Christian kingdom it had made great progress in educational matters, and its great ecclesiastical schools were very much on the lines of those of other European countries, especially England, for after the conquest of Lisbon by Alfonso I in 1147, the first bishop of that city was Gilbert, an Englishman.[2]

Here the little boy studied Holy Scripture, grammar, the elements of rhetoric and logic, and probably plain chant. He evidently went to school daily, for we are told that until he was 15 "he lived in simplicity at home". Tradition tells us he had several brothers and sisters, but of this we cannot be certain.

Lisbon, like other great seaport towns, was full of temptations for the clever, gifted boy. The Court was at Coimbra, but the beautiful city on the Tagus was the home of a wealthy and brilliant society to which Fernando's parents evidently belonged. During these fifteen years he had ample opportunity of taking part in pleasures and gaieties of all sorts, and there were not wanting those who would have

[1] Jean Rigauld. [2] Lepitre, p. 11.

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led him into such evil courses as were pursued, he saw plainly, by many youths of his own standing. He considered the matter carefully. Here on one side were all the pleasures of the world, both those which it was so natural that he should enjoy and those that were forbidden; and, on the other, renunciation,—the listening to that still small voice which speaks insistently to the hearts of God's closest children, calling them to leave all, to hate father and mother, wife, children, and the whole world for Christ's sake, which we call Vocation.

It was not by any means easy to decide. Fernando was a highly strung, sensitive boy with hot Southern blood in his veins. On no point in his early career do the chroniclers insist with such force as on the severity and intensity of the struggle. One thing we are specially told: though, like St. Bernard, cruelly and repeatedly tempted, Fernando never for a moment shut his ears to that silent voice which he had heard from his earliest childhood, and which called him to something even higher than a holy life in the world. And life was marvellously attractive to the handsome, clever boy. He meditated during that season of temptation upon the joys it could give him, but found, as all the Saints have found, that he could not count on them for temporal, much less for eternal happiness. In a word, he found he could not save his soul in the world. And so Fernando, innocent, but not ignorant of evil, with a career before him and the world at his feet, offered his stainless life a voluntary

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sacrifice to God, "having the dew of his youth, and the beauty thereof, as the Angels".

An old legend tells us that once during this time while he was praying in the Cathedral choir, a prey to great temptation, the devil appeared to him in the shape of a hideous monster. Fernando traced the sign of the cross on the marble step on which he was kneeling, which received it as if it were soft wax, and the devil fled precipitately. A cross deep-cut in the step can be seen there at the present day, but its connexion with the story is only traditional.

All through our Saint's life we shall see how each one of its definite stages was a perfect preparation for the next; his early days of regular study with the Canons of the Cathedral and the quiet sheltered life at home was the best introduction possible to the first great step in his career. For when he was 15, Fernando "left his father and mother, and gave up all right to inherit from them". He made the irrevocable decision, finally renounced the world, and entered the Monastery of Canons-Regular of St. Augustine at St. Vincent *extra mures*, just outside Lisbon. Here he received the white habit "with humble devotion," set himself "to attain the highest degree of perfect wisdom," and made his first vows.

We do not learn that any obstacle was placed by his parents in the way of his fulfilling his vocation, but we infer that it was a cause of great regret to his family. His mother, we may be sure, renewed the oblation of her eldest son to God, but his friends

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and relations evidently considered that he had thrown his life away. They visited him continually, —far too often for his peace. If they did not actually beg him to return to the world they broke into his solitude, and the silence which he had learned to love, with stories of the gay doings in Lisbon, and of worldly affairs in which the young religious neither had, nor desired to have, part. The Monastery of St. Vincent was a house of strict observance. It had been founded by the first King of Portugal, some fifty years earlier, for the repose of the souls of those crusaders slain at the siege of Lisbon, and was a daughter-house of the great Monastery of Holy Cross, at Coimbra.

It was to this monastery that Fernando's thoughts now turned, for it was practically impossible for him to escape from the pertinacity of his friends so long as he remained near Lisbon. He had no desire to risk his peace of heart, and perhaps his vocation, and his one object now was to find God through the silence of the cloister in the silence of the soul. He petitioned his superiors to send him to Coimbra, but "it was not without difficulty that he obtained permission . . . for he was beloved by all on account of his great sanctity and amiability". His Prior finally allowed him to make the desired change, and after two years spent at St. Vincent's Monastery, Fernando left it to join the Mother House at Coimbra. "There truly," says Rigauld, "he advanced rapidly in religious perfection and holiness; there also, thanks to the inspiration of Him who teaches independently of

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time . . . he armed himself with the most solid teaching of the Fathers, so as to preach to heretics later on, and to defend the Holy Truths of the Faith against their attacks. This light, received from God who had chosen him, and for whom he had left all, was so great that henceforth his memory served him in the place of books and he was presently filled with the Spirit of Wisdom." We shall see later how this marvellous memory, richly stored with Holy Scripture and with the writings of the Fathers, was to help him to become "the first Franciscan orator," the greatest preacher of his day.

The eight peaceful years which the young monk passed at Coimbra (1212-20) were a long retreat, during which, unconscious of his true vocation, he was laying, by ceaseless prayer and diligent study, the foundation of his future marvellous career. It is scarcely too much to say, given his character and temperament, and his burning zeal for God, that Antony the Friar-Minor and Miracle-worker was the logical development of Fernando the cloistered monk.

A few words may be said here as to the Order which played so important a part in the training of our Saint. "By the general term 'Canons,'" says M. Lepitre, "seems to have been designed . . . those clerics vowed to the service of a special Church, while following a Rule. All had not at first the same constitutions; but at the Second Lateran Council (1139) Innocent II ordained that all should follow the Rule of St. Augustine."

Holy Cross, founded in 1132, was an independent

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monastery which had charge of several parishes; "for . . . the work of Canons Regular, to whatever congregation they might belong, was not only the Divine office in choir, but also the care of souls, in the churches to which they were attached, and the parishes submitted to their jurisdiction."[1] A distinguishing mark of the Canons Regular was that they were "vowed in a special manner to study . . . with the particular aim of rendering them more fit for the service of God and souls, and to prepare them, if they had sufficient aptitude, to fulfil pastoral functions in the Church". Special care, in this regard, was bestowed upon those who seemed more highly gifted than their brethren.

The first Prior of Holy Cross, St. Theotonius, the friend of St. Bernard, had left here ineffaceable traces of his government of twenty years. The Rule was followed in spirit as in letter; the house was a centre of literary culture and the abode of tranquillity and peace. It was an ideal home for one whose life was devoted to prayer and study. And we must not forget that of the twenty-one years he spent in religion our Saint passed ten under the Rule and in the white habit of St. Augustine. It is extremely probable that he was ordained priest at Holy Cross—he must at least have been deacon—for the monasteries of Canons Regular were in a

[1] The question as to whether a Canon Regular was technically a religious was warmly debated in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; St. Thomas Aquinas pronouncing finally that a Canon could lawfully enter a recognized Order because he would then tend to a higher degree of perfection.

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sense schools for priests; but in the absence of definite evidence many biographers have supposed that he received the priesthood after his entrance into the Franciscan Order.

During these years two legends[1] are recorded of him.

One day, soon after his arrival at Coimbra, Fernando, who was engaged in sweeping the cloister outside the church during Mass, which he had been anxious to hear, fell on his knees at the bell for the Consecration. Suddenly the wall between seemed to open before his eyes, and he saw the altar and the priest standing with the Sacred Host elevated in his hands. God chose thus to reward the obedience and humility of His servant.

The second legend is as follows:—

Fernando, charged (probably as infirmarian) with the care of a sick monk, laid his own amice upon his shoulders, whereupon the patient immediately recovered.

Beautiful as these stories are we find them first related in the seventeenth century. And it cannot be said too often—the glory of the Miracle-worker does not depend upon legends.

But while the young religious was growing daily in holiness and learning—(he never forgot, we are told, anything he read, and his life was a mirror of perfection)—the two great Friar Orders of St. Dominic and St. Francis, which were to transform the thirteenth century, had taken root in the soil of Spain and Italy, and were already beginning to spread and flourish. In 1220 the Order of Friars Minor re-

[1] To mark the difference between legend and miracle the former, throughout this book, are as a rule printed in small type.

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ceived its baptism of blood in Morocco, and from this glorious martyrdom was to spring the fairest of all the Little Flowers of St. Francis, the Saint who seems to belong to every country and to every age —Antony of Padua.

CHAPTER II.

(1220–1222.)

"*GEMMA PAUPERTATIS.*"

THE first mission of the Friars Minor took place in 1209, when having only three companions, St. Francis of Assisi sent Bernard of Quintavalle and Peter of Cataneo to Emilia, going himself with Brother Giles to the Marches of Ancona. The second occurred at the close of the same year, when St. Francis and his seven companions went two and two into Umbria and the adjacent provinces. The third mission, in 1210, when there were about twenty *Frati*, included all the provinces of Italy, St. Francis reserving for himself and Brother Silvestro that of Tuscany. In 1216, after the First General Chapter, a fourth mission was sent out to all the countries of Europe, and thus, in 1217, the Friars Minor first came to Spain and Portugal. Brothers Zachary and Gauthier on their arrival in the latter country immediately presented themselves to the Bishop of Coimbra and to the Court. Queen Uraca, and her sister-in-law Princess Sancia, both devout Catholics, established the Friars, with the full consent of King Alfonso II, in the hamlet of St. Antony-

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of-the-Olives, three miles from Coimbra, in the year 1218.

The fifth great mission of the new Order to all quarters of the world took place after the Second General Chapter in 1219, when St. Francis chose for himself, as being attended with the greatest danger, the mission to Syria and Egypt. Six friars, Fathers Vitalis, Berard, Peter and Otho, with two lay-brothers, Adjuto and Accursio, whose one desire was to win for themselves the crown of martyrdom, were sent to Morocco, and to reach their destination they travelled through Portugal and Spain. Father Vitalis fell ill, and was most reluctantly obliged to remain behind, but the others pressed on, spending a few days on their journey at the little Franciscan house at St. Antony-of-the-Olives towards the close of the year 1219.

Tradition tells us that at that time Fernando was Procurator of the Monastery of Holy Cross, where the friars were always welcomed when they came to beg for food, and that he had been deeply impressed by the holiness and angelic piety of one of their members who was generally sent on this errand. There is every reason to believe he actually saw the five heroic missionaries on their way to certain death, and it is therefore quite possible he heard them speak "of obtaining for the love of Christ who died for us the palm of martyrdom which they so earnestly desired". One thing is certain: from that time the desire to win the same crown began to burn in the young Canon's heart. The serene life in the quiet stately monastery, with

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its peaceful ordered days, no longer fully satisfied him, or quenched the Divine thirst for suffering ever increasing within his soul. It was no ordinary restlessness and love of change, but the Voice of the Holy Ghost, which, though as yet he knew not how, called him to do and suffer greater things than these.

The five Franciscans nearly met their death at Seville, where they preached as they passed through the beautiful Moorish city, but the Saracen Prince, instead of slaying them, sent them straight on to the city of Morocco, the chief stronghold of Mohammedanism in North Africa. Its ruler, Abu Jacob, a sluggish, indolent man, was inclined to overlook at first the deeds which made Morocco ring! It was not many weeks since Pope Honorius III had written to him specially pleading for toleration for Christians, and Abu Jacob had furthermore at the head of his army Don Pedro, brother of the King of Portugal, who having quitted his country on account of a political quarrel was now holding the somewhat invidious position of commander-in-chief in Morocco. But when, in spite of this Prince's counsels, Berard, not content with preaching openly in the streets, actually cried again and again to Abu Jacob passing by in his state chariot: "Jesus Christ is the True God, Mohammed is nothing but an impostor,"—that potentate was roused to fury. The friars were seized and dragged before him. The choice of abjuration or death was offered them, and with one voice they chose death. Abu Jacob, concluding that they were mad, and not wishing to

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offend either the Pope or (through Don Pedro) the King of Portugal, ordered them to leave the country immediately. They were escorted to Ceuta, but found means to escape, returned to Morocco, and again began to preach. Abu Jacob ordered them to be imprisoned twenty days without food or water, but at the end of that time they were found to be alive and well, and impatient to continue their mission.

Once more the Emir sought to spare them, but after some time, finding that even Don Pedro's arguments had no influence with them, and that nothing would stop them from preaching and exciting tumults in the city, he ordered them to be put to death. They were scourged with such fearful cruelty that their bodies were almost cut to pieces. Boiling oil and vinegar were then poured over them, and they were rolled on the ground over fragments of broken glass and pottery. Again they were offered their lives if they would abjure Christ. But at the very gates of Heaven it was not likely that they should yield the crown which they had given all to gain! They were beheaded, the Emir himself striking the fatal blow, and the people, flinging themselves eagerly upon the torn and broken bodies, dragged them out of the streets to a piece of waste ground outside the city, covered them with filth, and tried to burn them. But before this could be done a fearful storm drove the Moors away, the Christians crept out secretly and took possession of the relics, which Don Pedro placed in two splendid *châsses*, and contrived with

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great difficulty and danger to convey out of the country.

Thus died the first Franciscan martyrs, whose glorious story is too little known. Their feast is kept on the day of their triumph, 16 January (1220). Don Pedro himself conveyed the relics back to Spain, and openly declared that to his certain knowledge many miracles had been wrought by them already. From Galicia the *châsses* were brought to Coimbra, with much pomp and splendour, and deposited in the beautiful church of the monastery of Holy Cross. The reason of this was partly to satisfy the devotion of Queen Uraca to the first martyrs of the Order in which she was so greatly interested, whose relics she desired to have near her palace; and partly because, if indeed the Franciscans possessed a chapel, it would not have been large enough to contain the crowds which came to pray at the shrine.

What was the effect on Fernando at the sight of these relics—the bodies of men with whom he had probably spoken a few weeks earlier, and who were already martyrs whose miracles were beginning to be noised abroad? At last he understood the final development of his vocation. He was called, not to the ordered life of a Canon Regular, but to the hardships, and as he earnestly hoped to the martyrdom, of a poor friar. "Oh, if Almighty God would grant me to share the death of these holy martyrs!" he said to himself; "if He would grant me to die like them for the Holy Name of Jesus! Dare I think that this day will come? Dare I believe that this joy will be granted to me?" His very soul was on fire with

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the passionate desire to die for Christ, and he only knew one way in which to attain it. From this moment he knew no rest till he had exchanged the fair white habit of St. Augustine and his quiet life of study for the rough serge and cord of St. Francis . . . and the prospect of a martyr's crown.

He lost no time. When the friars next came for food he "saw them secretly," and said: "My brothers, most willingly would I take the habit of your Order if you would promise immediately to send me to the Saracen country, for thus I may hope to acquire the merits of your holy martyrs, and share their crown". All the generous enthusiasm of his impetuous youth is behind the appeal! And filled with joy, the "simple illiterate friars" accepted eagerly this wonderful new subject, no raw recruit, but an educated experienced religious. They promised to bring him the Franciscan habit the very next day, and departed in delight.

By a decree of Pope Adrian IV no monk could leave Holy Cross without the permission not only of his Superior, but of the entire community. The former Fernando gained with much difficulty; of the latter we know nothing. One of the bas-reliefs surrounding his Chapel at Padua represents him receiving the habit from the friars in the presence of some of the Canons. If the latter had reluctantly given their consent, most of them had apparently done their best to dissuade him. As he left the monastery, the home of so many happy years, the school in which he had been trained for his marvellous apostolate, one of them "who loved him

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much" called after him: "Go—go! you will doubtless become a Saint!" "When you hear that I am a Saint, give glory to God!" replied Fernando gently. In little more than twelve years he was indeed raised to the altars.

And so he passed for the second time from his friends and went in the early spring sunshine down the olive-clad slopes to the little convent, scarcely more than a group of huts like the *Portiuncula*, for which he had exchanged the cloisters of Holy Cross. It must have been for the scholar and student, born in a palace and trained in a royal monastery, a more tremendous renunciation than that which he made on first entering religion. It is quite clear that the friars, distinguished for nothing but holiness, and like the Apostles, "unlearned and ignorant men," had not the faintest comprehension of the type of man they had secured, nor of his varied learning. The fact of a young Augustinian Canon joining their new-born, scarcely constituted Order was in itself a great event. They did not go beyond that. And few things more plainly show the exquisite humility of our Saint than the fact that he never enlightened these, nor the far more important authorities whom he was shortly to meet. He must have missed the wonderful library, and his quiet cell where he could pray and study in solitude. But he was a Saint: he not only accepted but embraced this cross.

We learn that "during the time he dwelt with the friars in this house he formed himself to the practice of poverty, chastity and obedience accord-

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ing to the Rule of the Friars Minor". He saturated himself with the Spirit of the Order. Perhaps he even went with a companion to beg for food, at the gates of his old monastery. He asked the friars to change his name, "a great thing" says Rigauld, "for Fernando is the name of Kings".

Such a practice was as yet very unusual, and various reasons have been advanced for his doing so, none of which seem satisfactory. He took, however, the name of the patron Saint of the convent, St. Antony, Abbot. The novitiate was then unknown. It was not indeed imposed till September, 1220, by a Bull of Pope Honorius III. Antony made his profession in the hands of his superiors shortly after his admission.

He had not forgotten his great desire. Day and night the thought of it haunted him. He believed that if he could but once reach Morocco his martyr's crown would be secured. He begged his Superior to send him, as soon as possible; and in the autumn of 1220 Antony, probably with one companion, sailed for Ceuta.

But no sooner had he reached the goal than, worn out and wasted by the strain of the last few months, and doubtless by the austerities he had lately practised, he fell ill, and for a whole winter lay between life and death. It must have been the keenest disappointment of his life. He lay there helpless, unable to move, so consumed with fever that even his burning zeal was compelled to yield to physical weakness. The cries of the people, the noise of the Moslem city, was in his ears, and he

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could do nothing! The martyr's crown hung before his eyes, and he could not grasp it!

After the fire, the still small voice. "Brought down," says Rigauld, "by a long and painful illness he understood that he was not to succeed in his attempt. . . . Fastened as he was to the Cross of Penance with Christ crucified, did he not suffer continual martyrdom?" He learnt that he was not called to shed his blood in Morocco, for another, and to one of his temperament, even greater sacrifice awaited him. A confessor, it has been well said, is a martyr stopped half-way on the road to martyrdom. Antony had come to the parting of the ways. He understood at last that God asked not his death, but his life, and it became his duty to save it at all costs. He determined to return to his native country to recruit his shattered health. Having left Portugal with the avowed hope and intention of shedding his blood for Christ, he proposed to return to his monastery to fulfil the Will of God by apparent failure!

Perhaps nothing in the story of his beautiful life is more pathetic than this exquisite and perfect renunciation of his own will in that of Almighty God —more wonderful than any miracle, a greater triumph than his most eloquent sermon "*Non mea voluntas sed Tua fiat*". And with the simplicity of a child St. Antony embarked for Portugal as soon as he could be moved. He had not struck a single blow for Christ in Moslem Morocco—he had done nothing—but obey!

But God had other designs for His servant. The

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ship was driven on the shores of Sicily by contrary winds, and Antony landed near Messina, outside which city was a small house of his Order. It was while he was resting here that news arrived of the General Chapter to be held in May (1221) at Assisi. Antony at once asked leave to go. We have no details as to his journey, but he reached the Umbrian hills in time for the Chapter, which opened on 30 May.

It is difficult to imagine Assisi as it was then, still uncrowned by the beautiful Basilica of San Francesco, and when the dome of Our Lady of the Angels, built by St. Pius V, did not cover the humble huts clustered round the *Portiuncula* on the plain below. Though not so largely attended as the Chapter of 1219, at least 2000 friars were present,[1] and the country people brought them food and wine in such quantities that after seven days there still remained provision for two. Brother Elias, the Vicar-General, presided, St. Francis himself sitting at his feet, and telling him in his faint broken voice all that he wished to say to his children.

It was a glorious sight to meet the eyes of the young enthusiast. Here in this mighty crowd were men as eager for martyrdom as himself! St. Francis called for volunteers for the mission to Germany—one of peculiar danger—and eighty friars immediately responded. But Antony was not one of these. He had learnt his lesson, and he waited to learn God's will for him. Moreover he did not know

[1] This was the last Chapter which the general body of friars was permitted to attend.

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German, and he stood by, silent, humble, while volunteers pushed forward from all sides. His heart must have burnt within him as he saw St. Francis, with the wounds in hands and feet and side, so near Heaven, blessing his children and sending them forth into all parts of the world,—that Seraphic Father who, like himself, had sought the crown of martyrdom in vain! Here too were Thomas of Celano, the chronicler of the Order, and John of Pian-Carpino who was to be one of the first pioneers of the "Society of Christ's Wandering Friars"; that glorious band of missionaries, Franciscan and Dominican, of whom the world to-day knows so little, which yet invaded Asia, Christianized the Khan of Tartary and thousands of his people, fought victoriously the hideous Nestorian heresy in China and India, giving countless martyrs to the Church, watering the soil with their blood, and establishing wherever they went churches, monasteries, and bishoprics three centuries before the day of St. Francis Xavier! Here were the Saints and heroes of the Order; here was its cradle! It was at the *Portiuncula* that St. Antony met St. Francis of Assisi!

The Chapter was over; the friars were all dispersing to their various labours and Antony stood alone. "No minister sought for him because he was known of none." It was perhaps the final test of his humility. No one guessed that in the young unknown Portuguese friar whom nobody wanted, there stood, next to St. Francis himself, the glory of the Order, the Miracle-worker who eleven years

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later would be invoked as a Saint. "Then Blessed Antony humbly accosted Brother Gratian, Provincial of Romagna, earnestly entreating him . . . to take him with him and"—not give him a difficult and dangerous mission, but—"form him in the practice of religious discipline".

According to one legend the Provincial inquired if he were a priest, to which Antony replied simply, "I am". A priest was needed to say Mass for a small convent of lay-brothers at Monte Paolo, near Forli in Tuscany, and whether or not the legend be true, it was to Monte Paolo the Saint went.

This hermitage, situated, like so many of the early Franciscan houses, on a lonely and precipitous hill, was Antony's dwelling for nearly a year.[1] One of the Brothers had hewn a little cell out of the rock, and Antony begged his permission to use it. Here he spent the greater part of his days, living on bread and water, and inflicting on himself such austerities that his trembling limbs would sometimes scarcely sustain him, and he was obliged to accept the support of one of the brothers, when, according to Rule, he appeared at the evening collation. Here tradition tells us he encountered and routed the devil in person; here he was a prey to the fiercest temptations, for his public ministry was about to begin, and the months of conflict at Monte Paolo were the last stage of his preparation. He "armed himself against every temptation by rigorous austerity and sublime contemplation, and ground-

[1] If, as is possible, he was then a priest, he would naturally have been Superior of the little community.

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ing his spirit in Divine Love".[1] No one had the least idea that the humble friar who begged permission "to wash the plates and kitchen utensils, and also the feet of the friars which he then devoutly kissed,"[1] and who gave way in everything to his companions, was one of the most distinguished scholars of the greatest monastery in Portugal. He clung to humility, "the guardian and protector of every virtue". Except in "a few rare and very short lectures" given by him, his brethren could perceive no signs of his learning, for "Blessed Antony, as the humblest of men, assiduously sought out the humblest occupations".[1]

"And as he had given proof of his humility," continues Rigauld, "in concealing his learning, in working diligently in humble offices, in submitting himself to his travelling companion, and in humbling himself completely when in charge as Superior . . . God would not permit so burning a light to be hidden in such a manner, but that it should be placed upon a candlestick."

An ordination of Dominicans and Franciscans to the priesthood was to take place at Forli. Antony, probably as companion to the Provincial, was present. After the ceremony (and possibly in the refectory) the Superior invited the Dominican guests in turn to preach a short sermon, as was the custom. But each excused himself, pleading lack of preparation. Then the minister, turning to St. Antony, desired him to preach. He had sometimes heard him speak Latin, but was otherwise quite un-

[1] Rigauld.

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aware of his learning, thinking, as did his brethren, that the occupation for which he was best fitted was that of washing dishes. After attempting in vain to excuse himself, the Saint mounted the pulpit. He preached (says tradition) from the words: "*Christus factus est pro nobis obediens usque ad mortem; mortem autem crucis*".

"He began, in the fear of God, with simple words, but enlightened by Heavenly grace, and assisted by his memory, which served him in place of books, his language as he went on became so sublime, he explained so clearly the deep mysteries of Holy Scripture, he captivated the minds of his hearers with such overpowering eloquence"[1] that all were astonished. Carried away by his oratory, Dominicans and Franciscans cried with one voice: "Never man spake like this man!"

It was thus that St. Antony preached his First Sermon!

CHAPTER III.

(1222–1224.)

"*NOVA LUX ITALIÆ.*"

THE mediaeval history of the country which to-day calls itself "United Italy" is as intricate and elaborate as a web of its own Venetian lace. It is, however, impossible to realize the difficulties and even dangers of such an apostolate as that of St. Antony

[1] Rigauld.

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without possessing some slight idea of the state of this collection of warring republics and restless cities, with their deadly jealousies, their endless quarrels, and their unceasing kaleidoscopic combinations—one town against three, two against five; Genoa at deadly grips with Venice for the mastery of the sea; the great Tuscan cities, Florence, Siena, Pisa and the rest, torn (besides their private jealousies) by the long and bloody struggle of Guelf and Ghibelline. The whole country was a hotbed of treason, plotting, and bribery. There was no idea of political unity then, for with the fatal shortsightedness which seems to have been from the beginning so distinctive a characteristic of the peoples of Italy, each city thought only of its own advantage.

Moreover, in each town there were at least two parties, and it was invariably torn by internal dissensions, refusing to look beyond its own walls and see itself as part of a whole. Each State, each republic sought, not for the glory of the beautiful country of which it was a member, still less that of the Church and its visible Ruler at Rome, but its own supremacy.

Consequently the unfortunate country was ever a prey to the invader. French and Spaniards were soon to contend for Naples; Milan and Lombardy were the seat of almost continual war. It was the old fable of the bundle of sticks. So from the twelfth to the sixteenth century the state of Italy was indescribable. The thirteenth century, the age of saints, of poets, of artists, was in a special sense the century of contrasts.

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"The reign of brute force," says an Italian writer,[1] "rendered the nobility pitiless to the poor. Sensuality, coarse in proportion to the rarity of the intellectual life, permitted the wildest excesses, and ignorance allied to superstition and fanaticism was the common patrimony of nobles and people. Manicheism, in substituting superstition for religion, the deliberate lowering of the moral standard for the lofty teaching of Christianity, brute force for the sanctity of rightful possession, had ruined society, the family, and even the sanctuary itself. . . . To reform itself Society needed Saints."

It was then to a country weakened by civil war and poisoned by heresy that St. Antony was sent on his first mission of healing.

The Manicheism of the fourth century, so bravely opposed by St. Augustine but never utterly crushed, was, under other names, and in a slightly different form, now rampant in Central Europe, France, and Italy. This peculiarly deadly heresy was "a simultaneous attack on the Catholic Church and the existing State. The Church was directly assailed in its doctrine and hierarchy; the denial of the value of oaths and the suppression of the right to punish undermined the State."[2] But the worst social danger in the heretical principle was that its triumph meant the ultimate extinction of the human race. For the Catharist no salvation was possible without previous renunciation of marriage, lawful or unlawful, and

[1] Dal Gal, p. 76.

[2] See articles: "Catharist," and "Albigenses," in "Catholic Encyclopædia".

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suicide (the *endura*) by starvation was held not only to be permissible, but highly commendable.

Known in France (where the heresy was secretly introduced in 1015 and whence it spread to Italy) as Albigenses, its followers were called in the latter country Cathari, or Patareni. The North of Italy, Lombardy, the Veneto, and particularly the Adriatic coast, were saturated with the heresy, its chief strongholds being Rimini and Milan.

Its creed was dualistic. It taught that there were two principles, Good and Evil, of which the former created the invisible and the latter the visible universe. The Absolutist sect declared the Good principle was eternally equal with the Bad; those less severe urged that the Evil principle was inferior to, and a mere creation of the Good. In Italy, where the Absolutists prevailed, John of Bergamo (1230) declared there were two contending Gods; each of whom limited the other's liberty. Infinite perfection, he said, was no attribute even of the Good principle, as owing to the Evil genius it could only produce imperfect creatures. Another party maintained that human souls had been created and had sinned before the foundation of the world; while a third declared, unashamed, that Satan had infused into the body of the first man (in the place of a soul), an angel who had been guilty of a "slight transgression," and that this was the origin of all human souls.

All this, as is clearly evident, is a hideous travesty and caricature of the Catholic doctrines of original sin, freewill, and mortification. And on the face

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of it it is difficult to understand how a heresy which enforced as its chief tenet an unnatural asceticism, should have laid hold so rapidly, so completely, of the hot-blooded races of the South. The explanation is simple: (1) Whoever joined the sect was assured from that moment of eternal happiness; (2) there were various grades among the Cathari. The Perfect, or Absolutists, of whom there were 4000 in the world in the middle of the thirteenth century (of which 2400 were in Lombardy), were indeed bound to every Catharist doctrine; but beyond them there was the great mass of "Believers," who were allowed to marry and live the common life. These, however, "give themselves up to usury, theft, murder, perjury, and all the sins of the flesh, with all the more security because they have no need either of confession or penitence. It suffices that at the hour of death they recite the Paternoster and receive the Spirit." [1]

Perhaps the most subtle danger of Catharism from a religious standpoint was that, as in the days of St. Augustine, its followers masqueraded as Catholics. They were regular at Mass, and some even frequented the Sacraments. It was in its very nature a secret society, and the sacrilegious acts of its members made it difficult outwardly to distinguish them from the faithful. Popes and Emperors had striven again and again to crush Catharism, but in vain. These were the men who murdered St. Peter Parenti in 1199; St. Dominic's companion, Peter of Castelnau, the Papal Legate, in 1208; St. Peter

[1] Vaux Cernay, quoted by Chérancé, p. 67.

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Martyr in 1252. Their existence was the gravest menace to Church and nation, for they were numerous and well-organized, and by their caricature of Catholic discipline and austerities had earned for themselves among the ignorant a certain reputation for sanctity. One thing only, they said, was necessary to salvation: to receive the *Consolamentum* or laying on of hands. No sin could be forgiven, after this, to the Perfect; but the mere Believers were allowed to evade the difficulty by receiving the *Consolamentum* at death.

To meet such men as these well-tried weapons and skilful swordsmen were needed. The Friars Preachers were already in the field; it was now the hour of the Sons of St. Francis. Several of these had entered the contest with but small success. St. Francis, who wished to overcome the world by love, whose friars were largely recruited from the simple and unlearned, who disapproved of and even forbade the possession of books of theology, doubtless saw that the elementary subjective teaching enforced by the most absolute poverty and angelic holiness of life, which was the equipment he desired for his sons, was insufficient when it came to dealing with the subtle arguments of well-read and wily heretics, who in their turn were able to pose as apostles of mortification. But no sooner did the Seraphic Father hear the account of the ordination at Forli, and of St. Antony's sermon, than he seized with joy upon the weapon which God Himself had placed in his hand. Perhaps the story of the young

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friar's early life in Portugal was told him, and he learned of his sound theological training at Coimbra. Forthwith he appointed Antony to the office of preacher.[1]

The public career of our Saint was now to begin. And here, just as we should have expected the most interesting facts, the fullest details, from his earliest biographers, we find confusion, or silence. True, the gap is filled by later writers, who from the fourteenth century onwards, copying and improving on each other's chronicles, have left us accounts of St. Antony which are, at the very best, doubtful, while some are manifestly improbable, and even historically untrue. We must again remind ourselves that the thirteenth century "Legends" are all that can be relied on, that those we possess are more or less fragmentary, practically dateless, and extremely unsatisfactory in their chronology. From these, however, we learn that St. Antony preached in Italy before his mission to France, from which country he returned shortly after the death of St. Francis (1226-27). The date of the Forli ordination was 1222, and as it is almost certain that St. Antony was in France in 1224, his stay in Italy would not have been a long one.

Armed with the commission of St. Francis to preach against heresy, Antony chose to attack its head-quarters, and went first to Rimini. "He took nothing with him in travelling, but, delighting in

[1] "The General forthwith obliged Antony to appear in public by appointing him to the office of preacher" (Rigauld, C.V.).

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poverty, he traversed countries and provinces in the most complete destitution as a pilgrim and stranger upon earth."[1]

At Rimini, Antony had a greater measure of success with the heretics than any former preacher, and though he did not succeed in crushing their false doctrines, he made a large number of converts. Amongst these was one of their leaders, Bonillo, who had been for thirty years a Catharist, and who remained a devout Catholic to his death.

But it is the miraculous Sermon to the Fishes which has made St. Antony's mission at Rimini famous.[2] Finding one day that his arguments were met by ridicule, and that scarcely anyone cared to listen to him, "Antony approached the river [Marecchia] which was near, and said to the heretics in the hearing of all the people: 'Since you shew yourselves unworthy to hear the Word of God, behold, I turn to the fishes, that your unbelief may be put to shame'. He then began to preach to the fishes with great fervour," reminding them of God's benefits to them in creating them, in giving them freedom, and clear water to live in, "and how He fed them without any labour on their part. At these words the fish began to assemble in crowds; they approached the Saint, raised their heads out of

[1] Rigauld.

[2] There is much discussion as to the locality of this miracle. Rigauld places it near Padua. But the weight of evidence goes to Rimini, and following M. Lepitre, we relate it here. Moreover, there is no great river near Padua.

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the water, looking attentively at him, and even opened their mouths. As long as it pleased him to speak, they listened with as much attention as if they had been gifted with reason, nor would they depart until he had given them his blessing." We are irresistibly reminded of the words of Him who said: "if these [children] should hold their peace the very stones should cry out."[1]

It was on his return from Rimini that Antony was appointed by St. Francis, Lector in Theology, a fact which has given rise to much discussion. "To my beloved brother Antony," runs the Brief, "Brother Francis, greeting in Christ. I desire that you instruct the brothers in Sacred Theology, provided that this study does not overcome in them the spirit of holy meditation and devotion according to the prescriptions of the Rule. Adieu." The letter, says Celano, was addressed to "*Brother Antony, my Bishop*".

Two things at least seem certain: St. Antony was the first Lector of the Order (and perhaps the first friar qualified to hold such a post); and St. Francis, with his supernatural insight as regards the necessities of his children, had modified his original intention as to their theological training. Our Saint first exercised this office at Bologna, not, as some have supposed, at the University (for it had

[1] Some writers place the Miracle of the Mule at Rimini, but as with our present insufficient knowledge its locality must remain an open question, we have followed P. Chérancé in placing it at Bourges, whither the weight of evidence appears irresistibly to tend.

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no chair of Theology till 1360-62) but in the Convent of Friars-Minor (1222-23). We are in complete darkness as to the details of his stay in this city, but we may feel sure he visited with devotion the tomb of St. Dominic, who had gone to his reward a few months earlier (6 Aug., 1221). Antony could not have remained long at Bologna. Even more important work awaited him, and it was perhaps on his way to undertake it that we find him next at Vercelli. Here, says tradition, he preached, Lent, 1223; here he made the acquaintance of Jean Gerson, believed by many to be the author of the "Imitation of Christ"; and here (which is manifestly impossible) he passed five years studying mystic theology under the celebrated master, Fr. Thomas Gallo, Abbot of Sant' Andrea, Vercelli, Canon Regular of St. Augustine.

That St. Antony was a mystic we shall presently see; and we know certainly that during his stay at Vercelli he formed a strong friendship with the great Abbot, which endured till death. They were in "familiar relations". "So quickly," writes Gallo, "did he acquire mystic theology that he was as one consumed inwardly by celestial fire, and outwardly luminous with Divine Knowledge."

But great as must have been the joy to our Saint to meet this master-mind, with whom he could converse of all that lay nearest his heart, his stay at Vercelli could not have been long, for if contemporary dates are to be trusted, in 1223-24 we find St. Antony in France.

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CHAPTER IV.

(1224–1226.)

"*MALLEUS HÆRETICORUM.*"

LESS perhaps is known of the years of St. Antony's sojourn in France, in many respects the most interesting of his history, than of any other part of his apostolate. The "Legenda Prima" does not even mention this mission, and it is to Jean Rigauld that we are indebted for nearly all we know of it. From the few facts we possess we can construct the probable itinerary of St. Antony. We know that he held certain offices, and wrought many miracles. But of his chief work, the crusade against the Albigenses, we know only this: that from his success in destroying their arguments, and from the numbers he gained for the Church, St. Antony won the title of "Hammer of Heretics".

Toulouse, in the latter half of the twelfth century, was the stronghold of that form of Catharism known as the Albigeois heresy which like an insidious disease had spread throughout France, and raged most fiercely over the beautiful plain of Languedoc. St. Dominic himself had not succeeded in exterminating it. The Counts of Toulouse, in the face of the danger which menaced both Church and Society, first fought, then temporized, finally themselves seceded. "The evil," writes Raymond V in 1117, "is so widespread that I neither can nor dare repress it." His son went farther, and favoured the rebels.

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Fearful were the outrages committed by the Albigeois chiefs. Churches, and even cathedrals, ruined, priests hacked to pieces while saying Mass, abbots cruelly blinded or slain outright, ecclesiastical property of all kinds stolen, monasteries sacked and their inhabitants driven out to beg—such deeds as these were of every-day occurrence.

"On one occasion Count Raymond de Foix, that 'wild beast let loose,' destroyed, after a short siege, the Church of Urgel, leaving only the four walls. Of the limbs of the great crucifix his scoundrels made spits to cook their food. Their horses ate oats on the altars."[1] They even dressed out the figure of our Lord in old rags, and amused themselves by piercing it with lances. "Come," cried the renegade, "the Church and the Abbey are in ruins! Nothing remains but to destroy God."

"If the Albigenses had triumphed," says a Protestant historian, "Europe would have returned to the horrors of barbarism."[2]

The campaign opened so gloriously by the Spanish Saint was to be continued by the Portuguese Miracle-worker. He was not the first Franciscan in the field. Since 1218 his brethren had been fighting in Languedoc, at posts of the gravest responsibility and of continual danger.

The date of St. Antony's arrival can only be approximately estimated, but it was probably at the end of 1223, or early in 1224. His mission was threefold: to convert the Albigeois, to teach theo-

[1] Chérancé, p. 69.

[2] Lea, "History of the Inquisition," Book I, p. 120.

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logy, and to make foundations. He went first to the quaint old city of Montpellier in Provence, where he held the office of Lector in Theology in the recently established Franciscan friary—not, as some have supposed, at the University.[1]

To Montpellier is attached the beautiful legend of the Lost Manuscript. St. Antony, lecturing on the Psalms, was in the habit of writing out his notes, and the manuscript by degrees became a valuable commentary.

A novice, greatly tempted to leave the Order, determined to run away, first stealing the precious book (which he thought of selling, as he had no money), and this he did. St. Antony, greatly distressed, asked the friars to pray earnestly for the return of the novice and the manuscript. The next day the door of his cell was burst open, and the novice appeared, trembling and weeping. Laying the manuscript at the Saint's feet he implored his forgiveness, and begged that he would intercede for him, that he might be received again into the Order. He said that in his flight he had come to the river, which was so flooded that he was unable to find either bridge [2] or ford. The devil then appeared to him, offering to carry him across if he would give him the manuscript which he carried. The novice at first agreed, but his terror at the aspect of the devil was so great that he was afraid to trust him. Hastily making the sign of the cross he turned and ran back to Montpellier, where, realiz-

[1] Founded in 1196 it did not possess a Chair of Theology till two centuries later.

[2] The Pont Nouveau at Lattes, a suburb of Montpellier, which occupies the site of the Pont Juvenal, is the Bridge of the Novice. It is a coincidence that the river which it crosses is subject to sudden and violent floods, often rising many feet. Below Montpellier it flows through marshy country to the Mediterranean.

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ing at length the greatness of his crime, he did not pause till he had restored the stolen book and begged for forgiveness.

This legend is generally supposed to be the origin of prayer to St. Antony to recover lost objects. It first appears in the "Liber Miraculorum" (1367). But as this special devotion to St. Antony goes back to the date of his death (1231) it may possibly be presumptive proof of the truth of the tradition. Another legend tells us :—

At Montpellier the Saint silenced the frogs which by their croaking at night in a neighbouring swamp greatly disturbed both the prayers and the rest of the friars.

But Antony was not very long at Montpellier.[1] We find him next at Toulouse, "a vast field for his apostolic work". The Friars Minor had been here for two years already.[2] And here, in this grand and

[1] The Cathedral of Montpellier was not founded till 1364, so St. Antony could never have preached there. It is possible that he preached in the celebrated Church of Notre Dame des Tables, which stood on the site of the present market. The Franciscan monastery, which was founded in 1220, and had a magnificent church in which were twelve chapels, was destroyed by Huguenots in 1562. The church subsequently built was also destroyed, and the third and last from which the friars were ousted at the Revolution was first turned into a Protestant temple, and is to-day a motor-garage. The parish church in St. Antony's time was St. Firmin, destroyed 1568 by Huguenots.

[2] Their convent was the gift of rich citizens of Toulouse and of two Franciscan prelates, Cardinal Messire Pierre de St. Foix and Jean de la Teissandière, Bishop of Rieux. "In this splendid convent St. Antony taught, and wrought

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historic city—to-day one of the most beautiful and interesting in France, with its desecrated, but still glorious churches and ruined cloisters—where in St. Antony's day the Black Confraternity of the Albigeois was vigorously opposed by the White Confraternity of Catholics under the holy Archbishop Foulques; where the contest between faith and error was still keen in spite of the great victory of the Crusaders under Simon de Montfort at Muret, ten years earlier—here, just when we should expect to find the fullest details as to our Saint's preaching, the miracles he wrought, and the souls he won from heresy, we find—nothing.

Perhaps the best explanation for this and other gaps in Antony's history is that the earliest biographers, ever on the look-out for the miraculous, scarcely thought anything else worth describing. If this is a working hypothesis it would go very far to prove that the celebrated Miracle of the Mule did not occur at Toulouse. "We are reduced," says Père Chérancé, "to repeat the desperate cry

miracles both before and after his death." At the Revolution all was sold "for the good of the nation," except the church, a perfect specimen of thirteenth century Gothic, which has been described as one of the most magnificent in France. This was used as a store for army forage, and crammed with hay and straw. It was accidentally burnt to the ground, probably through spontaneous combustion, 23-24 March, 1871. The tower, of the beautiful deep red brick for which Toulouse is famous, alone remains to-day a glorious and pathetic monument. On account of its great height the government found it convenient to turn it into a telegraph station (May, 1834). To-day the cumbrous débris of the old machinery still deface the tower.

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of Sicco Polentone, who, writing in the fifteenth century, exclaims: 'We know not half the beautiful acts of our Saint! The greater part are forgotten, either for want of authentic documents, or on account of deplorable negligence on the part of his first biographers.'" None of his historians observe any chronological order as to the places visited by St. Antony, but it is probable that his next stay (1225) was at Le Puy-en-Velay in the heart of the Cevennes, which, though distant, belonged to the Countship of Toulouse. If the tradition that St. Antony was Guardian here be true he perhaps founded the first house[1] of the Friars Minor in this beautiful mountain city, with its wonderful volcanic hills, the highest of which is crowned with a glorious grey Cathedral built of lava. Two legends come down to us from Le Puy.

A notary of Le Puy, of notorious life, was much discomposed by the fact that, whenever he met Antony, the Saint bowed down to the earth—as the notary believed, in mock reverence. One day he very angrily asked him (threatening him with death if he did it again,) why he chose thus to deride him publicly? To which Blessed Antony made reply that he knew by revelation that the grace of martyrdom for which he had most earnestly longed and sought was denied him, but would be granted to the notary. "And when this crown shall be given you," continued the Saint, "then remember me, I beg you, and pray for me." The notary laughed him to scorn, but shortly afterwards, touched by grace, he joined in a crusade organized by the Bishop of Le Puy against the Saracens, fought, and gained his crown almost as the martyrs of Morocco had won theirs.

[1] Now a private house.

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The other legend is this:—

A woman came to inquire of the Saint what manner of child should be born to her. Antony told her she would bear a son, that his name should be Philip, that he would become a Friar Minor, and die a martyr, all of which things came to pass.

But when we come to Berry and the Limousin we deal with facts as well as legend. It was probably in 1225 that St. Antony became Custodian[1] at Bourges, that picturesque town clustering round its magnificent Gothic Cathedral where our Saint doubtless preached; which rises stately across the grey water-meadows and purple heaths of that flat, but charming country. The Franciscan convent, of which no traces are left, was near the centre of the town, which, with its quaint cobbled streets is probably to-day in many respects much what it was in the thirteenth century.

Not very far from the Cathedral stands the beautiful grey stone church of St. Pierre-le-Guillard, built, says tradition, by the heretic who was converted by his mule. This miracle, like so many others, is claimed by at least three different places; Rimini and Toulouse (the latter almost certainly on insufficient grounds) dispute the honour with Bourges.[2] Without discussing the question of locality (which cannot without more precise evidence be definitely settled), the miracle itself may be re-

[1] **The Custodian had charge of several monasteries in a Province, directly under the Provincial.**

[2] **The evidence for all three places is excellently given in P. Dal Gal's "Life of St. Antony," pp. 81-87.**

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lated here. Though Berry was not a hotbed of heresy like Languedoc the Albigeois were still both numerous and aggressive, and St. Antony preached to them continually and successfully, receiving many into the Church. But "an obstinate and crafty heretic refused, in spite of the exhortations of Blessed Antony, to believe in the Real Presence of the Body of our Lord under the species of bread and wine in the Sacrament of the Altar. Although the testimony of the Truth Who cannot deceive, and Who said: 'This is My Body,' ought to be enough for any faithful and humble soul, this man would not yield. . . . Utterly devoid of faith, and trusting only to the evidence of his senses, he refused to admit the truth of the Sacrament, simply because he could see no change take place in the species. Touched by his incredulity"[1] St. Antony asked him whether he would believe if his mule should kneel and adore the Body of God. Whereupon the man replied that he would keep his mule without food for two days, and on the third would bring it to the public square. There he would offer it a measure of oats, while the Saint should be present with the Blessed Sacrament in a ciborium. "If the hungry animal leaves the oats to prostrate before the Body of Christ I will confess with heart and mouth the reality of the Sacrament." To this the Saint agreed, adding that in case the mule refused to adore "it would in no way affect the

[1] This and the following quotations are from Rigauld, who, however, says *horse* where almost every other legend says *mule*. We have retained the latter word.

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Truth," but ought rather to be attributed to his—Antony's—sinfulness.

Accordingly the starving mule was brought on the third day into the presence of a great crowd, in the midst of which stood St. Antony, bearing reverently the Blessed Sacrament, and near him the heretic with the oats. The animal, "left free to go wherever it chose, walked deliberately up to the Body of Christ, bent its knees reverently before the Saint who bore it, and remained kneeling till [he] gave it permission to rise."

On the very spot, says tradition, where the miracle took place the heretic built the beautiful church of St. Pierre-le-Guillard, consecrated by the Archbishop of Bourges in 1231, and evidently designed "to perpetuate the memory of some wonderful event". Close by was built—tradition again says, by the nephew of Guillard—a small chapel, on the walls of which were a series of bas-reliefs representing the miracle. This was destroyed nearly a century ago.[1] There is little doubt that both church and chapel were votive.

The Archbishop of Bourges, Simon de Sully, had no love for the new Franciscan Order. In spite of its formal approval at Rome, he, like many another aristocratic prelate, looked upon it as an innovation. At a certain synod in Bourges when St. Antony was

[1] The present (1910) curé of St. Pierre-le-Guillard has spoken to old people who remember going to Catechism in the Chapel of the Mule, as children. The evidence in favour of Rimini is purely negative.

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preaching he turned suddenly to the Archbishop. "To thee I speak, mitre-bearer," [1] he cried, and he proceeded openly to reproach him with certain "hidden faults," supporting his words with passages from Scripture, until the Archbishop was "seized with compunction and moved to tears, and to a devotion hitherto unfelt." At the close of the Sermon he "humbly manifested to [the Saint] the wounds of his conscience," confessing that he had spoken the truth. "From that time forth he was more faithful to God and a devoted friend to the Friars." [2]

What were the faults which Antony, greatly daring, yet God's chosen instrument, rebuked in his Archbishop, the friend of St. Louis and of the Pope? A certain slackness in his duties of which he was (1231) accused was disproved by him. The most probable explanation is his well-known hostility to the Order, of which he now became the firm supporter.

One-third of St. Antony's Apostolate was spent in France, and perhaps his most beautiful miracles were wrought here. He seems to have possessed, if not the gift of tongues, an extraordinary aptitude for "picking up" a new language. He must have spoken at least four: Latin, Italian, Portuguese, and French, with the greatest fluency, for though he preached in the language of the country he habitually wrote his sermons in Latin, the common tongue of learning.

[1] "*Tibi loquor, cornute.*" [2] Rigauld.

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In 1223 the Friars Minor had first come to Limoges, a fine fortified town on the Vienne. Here, as so often happened, they were befriended by the Benedictines, between whom and the new Order there existed a strong and beautiful tie of sympathy. Their first convent was at St. Paul's,[1] not far from the grand Abbey of St. Martin. Early in 1226 St. Antony was sent to Limoges as Custodian. He preached his first sermon here in the Cemetery of St. Paul, from the text: "Weeping endureth for a night, but joy cometh in the morning". His second was preached in the Abbey Church of St. Martin, on the words, "Who will give me the wings of a dove, that I may fly away and be at peace".[2] Dom Pierre Coral, the Benedictine Abbot, almost immediately made him a grant of a second site, close to the Abbey, and not far from the Cathedral.[3] It was here, and in the magnificent Church of St. Pierre-du-Queyroix whose slender steeple with that of St. Michel-aux-Lions rises clear above the huddled roofs of the highest part of the city, that St. Antony's most wonderful miracle was performed.

[1] Now the site of the railway-station. In the courtyard of the Hôtel de Bordeaux, just outside, still exists the Friars' Well—"la Fontaine des Menudets" now sealed up. The present Church of St. Paul is modern. (See "Notice sur St. Antoine de Padoue en Limousin," par l'Abbé Arbellot, Limoges, 1880.)

[2] "Arbellot," *ut sup.*, pp. 6, 8.

[3] St. Antony's convent stood on the site of the present "Palais Militaire"—i.e. barracks. The friars only remained here seventeen years. In 1243 they removed to a third house between the Cathedral and the river, which belonged to the Order till the Revolution.

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It was the night of Holy Thursday, 1226, and the Saint was preaching, doubtless from the great mystery of the day, to a crowded congregation in the beautiful church of St. Pierre-du-Queyroix. The people were hanging on his words. Suddenly he remembered that he was due in the choir of his convent to read the last lesson at Matins. He had forgotten to arrange for a substitute. There was no time now; St. Pierre-du-Queyroix is ten minutes' walk from the convent, even could he leave the pulpit. What followed was witnessed by the hundreds who were present. St. Antony leant forward in the pulpit, drew his cowl over his head so as to conceal his face, and remained silent for a few minutes. At the same moment his brethren in choir saw him walk out from his stall, read his lesson, and return to his place, whence he immediately disappeared. Then, as the people in the great church gazed, wondering, the hooded figure in the pulpit once more stood upright, threw back his cowl, and the Saint continued his sermon. It was by this wonderful miracle of bi-location that Almighty God permitted St. Antony to show his devotion to the Divine Office.[1]

The miracle, attested as it was by the whole body of friars, and more than a thousand of the population, produced the most profound impression. No church in Limoges was henceforth large enough

[1] **The present pulpit is of the Renaissance. The church with its beautiful double aisles is of the twelfth-thirteenth centuries. Legend attributes a similar miracle to Montpellier.**

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to contain the crowds which flocked to hear the Miracle-worker. Antony began to preach in the open air, in a wide empty space at the top of a low hill dominating the city,[1] Creux des Arènes. Here a second miracle took place. One day, shortly after the sermon had begun, clouds were seen to roll up, distant thunder grew loud, and there was every sign that a terrific storm was about to break. The people naturally began to seek shelter. "But the Man of God tranquillized them, saying quietly: 'Fear not, do not move nor cease listening to the Divine Word, for I trust in Him Who never suffers us to trust in vain, that the rain will not touch you'." And this came to pass, for, continues Rigauld, "the Almighty . . . withheld the rain from falling on their assembly, though all around them it poured in torrents. . . . When I entered the Order many Friars who had been present at this sermon were still living," declares the Limousin chronicler, "they even told me on what subject the Saint was preaching. Their testimony is worthy of entire belief, for they bore witness to what they had actually seen and heard."

The gift of discernment of spirits was granted in large measure to Antony. Brother Peter, a novice lately received into the convent at Limoges, was beset by such cruel temptations to leave the Order that he had secretly determined to run away. St. Antony being aware of this "by an interior light," sent for the novice one day, and after a few questions "opened the young man's mouth with his

[1] To-day laid out as a public garden.

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hands, and breathing into it said, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost'". From that hour to his last Brother Peter, who lived and died a fervent religious, declared he never had another such temptation.

These things could not be hid. All through the towns and villages of the Limousin the fame of the Miracle-worker was noised abroad, as he travelled about continually, preaching to large congregations in the open air. At St. Junien when the church would not contain the people, and a wooden pulpit was hastily extemporized outside, he declared aloud before beginning his sermon: "I know that presently, during the sermon, the enemy will attempt to molest you, but do not fear, for no one will be injured by his attempt". Very soon the hastily erected pulpit broke down, "causing great excitement, but without the slightest injury to anyone". Thus, as the people saw that this wonderful friar was also a prophet, their veneration grew to awe, and the rest of his sermon was listened to "with even greater reverence".

A life like this might well have taxed the strongest constitution, and Antony's was enfeebled by disease, and by ceaseless austerities. At the great Benedictine Abbey of Solignac, between Limoges and Brive, he fell ill, and was tenderly nursed in the infirmary. The monk in whose care he was had for long been a prey to the most violent and cruel temptations, and, as in the case of his own novice, this was understood of our Saint "by revelation". One day when they were alone the sick man spoke to the monk with the greatest tenderness, revealing to him his

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knowledge, and begging him to put on the tunic which he himself had worn. And as the shadow of St. Peter, much less the garments he had worn, healed the sick, so it was with the spiritual malady. "Scarcely had the tunic of Brother Antony touched the body of the tempted monk than . . . his soul was healed."

Antony's austerities were unusual, even in that austere age. The chain which he wore next his skin was long preserved in the Limoges convent. By continual prayer, by severest fasting, by cruel disciplines, he brought his own body into subjection, lest when he had preached to others he himself should be a castaway. Often "his trembling feet were scarce able to support him". The disease which so early cut short his life had already laid hold of him, but he never spoke of his sufferings, or complained. "Therefore," says Rigauld, with beautiful simplicity, "his blessed spirit being but slightly burdened with the weight of the flesh, raised itself on high, so that all his conversation was in Heaven; and by reason of this Almighty God from on High saw and granted his desires."

One sanctuary in France, the monastery of Brive, between Toulouse and Limoges can lay claim to the special honour of having been founded by St. Antony himself. Tradition tells us the first Franciscan habitation here was in the celebrated Grottoes, crevices partly natural, partly hollowed out of the rock on which stands the present monastery—now "secularized" and rented from the Government, which stole it, by a private individual. Here to-day

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the very cave is shown in which the Saint is believed to have lived; here the water falls drop by drop into the little basin which he is said to have scooped out of the rock that he might drink. But whether the first friars lived in the Grottoes—which is more than probable, remembering the Carceri and La Verna—or in huts hard by, we have Rigauld's testimony that St. Antony founded the Monastery of Brive. Two beautiful miracles took place here. The Grottoes are situated some distance outside the town, and it is to be feared the wants of the brethren were sometimes forgotten. One day when there was literally nothing to eat, St. Antony sent to beg a certain great lady to send them some vegetables from her garden. The lady bade her servant go and gather a large basketful, but the girl at first refused, saying that it was impossible that she should go out into the kitchen garden in the pouring rain. However, so earnestly did her mistress beg her that at last she yielded, and collecting a big basket of carrots, onions, and cabbages, ran with them through the storm to the monastery, where they were gratefully received. When she returned, in spite of the torrential rain, which had not ceased for an instant, not a thread of her dress nor a hair of her head was wet. The son of the lady in question, Pierre, Canon of Noblac, "often related this miracle, which he had heard from his mother".

No wonder the people loved him when his charity and courtesy were shown by such miracles as this!

The next deals with a very different world. It was St. Antony's custom to remain in the tiny ora-

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tory after Compline in the evening until the hour of Matins at midnight, in contemplation. One night when the moon was at its full the brethren came anxiously to call him out of choir, and to point out that in a field close by, belonging to a neighbour who had shown great kindness to them, a gang of men was busily engaged in tearing up and trampling down the springing corn. But the Saint answered: "Leave it alone, brothers . . . and continue your prayers, for this is only a trick of your enemy to disturb your night's rest and interrupt your prayer. Hold it for certain that no harm shall happen to our benefactor, nor shall anything be destroyed in his field." And so it happened, for next morning the field lay fair and untouched, "whereby they understood the devil's artifice, and conceived a still greater veneration for the piety and prayers of the Saint".[1]

There are countless legends of the Limousin: the woman whose child, fallen into a boiling cauldron, was miraculously restored to life; another, whose husband in a fit of jealousy tore out her hair, which was restored to her by the prayer of St. Antony; yet another who, prevented by her husband's sickness from being present at St. Antony's open-air sermon, heard him from her window two miles off, as she watched the congregation far away. But above all others stands out the beautiful legend of the Apparition of the Holy Child.[2]

[1] This miracle is also claimed by Limoges. We may perhaps call it the first Franciscan ghost-story!

[2] There is, alas! no contemporary evidence for this Appari-

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At Château-neuf St. Antony was the guest of a pious gentleman who, overcome with the honour of receiving the Saint into his house, took the unpardonable liberty of watching him secretly when he believed himself to be alone. He saw the Saint holding in his arms a beautiful child, whom he kissed with the greatest reverence and devotion, gazing upon His face with adoration. The astonished and stupefied host was pointed out by the Divine Child to Antony who immediately turned, and rebuking his curiosity, made him promise never to speak of what he had seen during his lifetime. But at the Saint's death the man proclaimed the story everywhere.

Such is the legend. Another apparition, that of St. Francis himself, yet living, and at the time in Italy, comes down to us on incontestable authority. At the Provincial Chapter of Arles, in Provence, where the friars had a convent[1] between the Cathedral of St. Trophimus and the great Roman amphitheatre, St. Antony was preaching to the assembled friars "in sweet and earnest words" from the title over the Cross: "*Jesus Nazarenus, Rex Judæorum*". Suddenly Brother Monaldo, "a man of tried virtue," looked up, and beheld over the doorway the figure of the Seraphic Father, his

tion. The first mention of it is in the "Liber Miraculorum" (1367); and the first known representation of St. Antony with the Holy Child was painted in 1459. No less than three places, Padua, Château-neuf, and Camposampiero claim to be the scene of it. It is related of a number of other Saints.

[1] To-day a *pensionnat*. The chapter-house is used for meals. A large stove stands on one side, from which a long black pipe runs up to the roof, through the beautiful vaulted, painted ceiling.

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pierced hands outstretched in blessing. Thus did Francis "bear . . . testimony to Antony, who . . . had so earnestly desired, and still continued to desire, the sufferings of the cross".

Of all the supernatural occurrences which gem the life of Blessed Antony this is the most remarkably authenticated. For not only did Fra Monaldo, its eye-witness, affirm it, not only did St. Bonaventure, Jean Rigauld, and others, record it; but St. Francis himself "openly attested the truth of it". Though this is of course not a miracle of our Saint it is one of the "signs following" which confirmed his apostolate. The date of this apparition is unknown, but it must have happened before 4 October, 1226.

The last miracle recorded of St. Antony in France shines out from a crowd of beautiful legends. It happened in a little Provençal village on the way to Marseilles, whither he was hastening *en route* for Italy after hearing of the death of St. Francis. Blessed Antony and his companion, worn with travel, had been invited by a poor woman to rest and dine in her house. Hastening down to the cellar to draw a jug of wine, the woman in her excitement and joy left the cask running, so that all the wine was spilt. Quite unaware of this, she set the jug, with glasses, and such food as she possessed before her guests. The second friar, on lifting his glass, accidentally knocked it against the table so roughly that it was broken in two. The woman said nothing, but she went down to the cellar again, and there, finding the wine on the

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floor and the cask empty, she wept aloud, and rushed upstairs "distracted with grief, disconsolate, beside herself. . . . Then Blessed Antony, touched with her grief, covered his face with his hands, and bent over the table . . . and while the woman anxiously awaited the result and the end of his prayer a marvellous thing suddenly took place: the goblet which was at one end of the table came and placed itself upon the stem which was at the other end." Astonished, the woman shook the wineglass roughly, but it was whole. "Only the power of the Saint's prayer could have done this. Believing that the same power that had restored the glass was quite able to restore the wine she had lost," she ran down to the cellar. According to her faith was her reward. "She was not disappointed of her hope;" for the half-cask she had lost she found a brimming cask of new wine "sparkling and bubbling". "God had just created it to spare His humble servant Antony from shame and reproach, and to make known . . . the power of his prayer."

St. Antony "made haste to leave the village . . . where he would have been held in honour," and continued his journey. But as the woman gazed after her marvellous guest she perhaps understood that in this weary, travel-worn stranger she too had entertained an Angel unawares.

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CHAPTER V.

(1226–1230.)

"*FŒDERIS ARCA.*"

We now arrive at a period of St. Antony's life of which we know even less than we do of his early years in the Order. Between the years 1226 (when he hastily returned to Italy on the news of St. Francis's death) and 1229, when Rolandino definitely states he first came to Padua, we have practically no contemporary data, though it is true these years are amply filled with details by the legends of the fourteenth-eighteenth centuries. We are thus informed that at Easter, 1227, Antony was sent on a special mission to Rome by the Minister-General, and there appointed by the Pope to preach to the pilgrims of all nations who had gathered for the Holy Week ceremonies, when the miracle of Pentecost renewed itself, and French and English, Slavs and Germans listening as one man to the sermon, each understood it in his own tongue. That after the General Chapter at Assisi at which he was created Provincial of Emilia (Romagna, the north-east side of Italy, comprising the country between Bologna and the Veneto, the Veronese and Trevisan Marches, and Adriatic seaboard), Antony again preached at Rimini, and then made an extended tour through his province, visiting Venice, Treviso, and Udine, and preaching Lent at Padua in 1228. That he then proceeded to Ferrara and Bologna,

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crossing the Apennines by the great road to Florence, which he reached in the autumn, and preached Advent, 1228, and Lent, 1229, in that city; after which he went north to Milan, where he had a great controversy with the Catharists, and then made a mission-tour through the Italian lake-country, winding up with Mantua, Verona, and Padua. That in 1230, after the General Chapter at Assisi, he again visited Rome on important affairs of the Order, and spent a long period at La Verna on his way back to Padua, in which city, after paying a visit to Verona and reducing the tyrant Ezzelino to abject submission, he spent the rest of his life.

These legends are in part very possibly true,[1] but we have no definite records. Three facts alone are absolutely certain: (1) St. Antony was present at the General Chapter in 1230, whence (2) he went to Rome, and (3) was at Padua both before and after those events. But as to the years 1226-29 we can only conjecture. It is possible that he was at the Chapter of 1227, and he was evidently elected to office, probably as Provincial of Emilia, for at the next General Chapter (1230) we find the Saint released at his own request from all administrative work.

[1] We may entirely dismiss the extraordinary legends which record how the Saint appeared suddenly (twice) in Lisbon to vindicate the innocence of his father, on one occasion accused of embezzlement, and on the other of child-murder! As M. de Kerval amusingly points out, the unfortunate nobleman must have had either a startling reputation, or been amazingly unlucky!

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St. Francis was canonized at Assisi in 1228, but we have no record that Antony was present, which would be explained by the fact of his absence in a distant part of the country. We can only conclude that during these three years he was engaged in Italy in active work, probably administrative. Legend, however, clothes these years with miracles, such as the story of the Florentine usurer, whose heart, declared the Saint after the man's death, would be found among his treasure, as indeed it was.[1] The legend of the Faded Sins is too beautiful to omit, though, alas! it is first related of St. John Climacus (525-605) and after him of at least two other Saints. A penitent, one of the crowds which thronged St. Antony's confessional, was so overcome with contrition that he was unable to utter a single word. The Saint bade him write on a slip of paper the sins which he could not repeat. But as Antony glanced at the list the sins effaced themselves one by one till nothing was left but a sheet of white paper!

Of the two miracles vouched for by Jean Rigauld, one is attributed by no less an authority than St. Antoninus of Florence to St. Peter of Verona, the Dominican Inquisitor martyred in 1252 by the Catharists. It is one of those sculptured in low relief round the walls of the *Cappella del Santo* at Padua, and by whichever Saint performed the story is as follows:—

[1] This legend belongs to the extensive category of those in which a simple fact or figure of speech is made the peg on which future centuries hang a startling miracle.

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A young man confessed to the Saint that in a fit of rage he had kicked his mother so violently as to throw her to the ground. "Seeing his compunction the Man of God enjoined him amongst other things to beg pardon most humbly of his mother." This the young man did, but his mother would only say that though he had her forgiveness he would doubtless never obtain that of Almighty God. "On hearing these words, overcome with grief, he . . . chopped off the foot, which had struck his mother, with a hatchet;" whereupon his cries and those of his mother brought the whole neighbourhood to the spot. "At that moment," continues Rigauld, "the Man of God happened to be passing; and when the cause of the tumult was explained to him he remembered that some one had accused himself in confession of having struck his mother, and entered the house." Taking the foot in his hands, he "held it to the place from which it had been cut," while praying earnestly, and in a moment the limb was whole. "Thus were shown the efficacy of contrition and confession in the young man, and also the power of Antony's prayer."

The whole scene is so characteristically and typically Italian that even were it not vouched for we should smile over its realistic truth. The second miracle is a very beautiful one: The Cathari who, like all heretics, were continually quoting Scripture to serve their own ends, invited our Saint to a meal at which a poisoned dish was set before him. Antony, who was aware of this by revelation, mentioned it to his hosts, who replied that they were

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merely anxious to make an experiment. "Is it not said in the Holy Gospel," they urged, "'eat that which shall be set before you?' And again, 'if ye drink any deadly thing it shall not harm you'?"

St. Antony of Padua
(Sienese School)

Then the Saint, with splendid simplicity, made the sign of the Cross over the food, saying: "I eat this, not with the design of tempting God, but of showing my zeal for the salvation of these souls, and for the Faith of the Gospel!"

He was rewarded by the conversion of his hosts.

It was not until 1229 that our Saint visited Padua. It may at first seem strange that his name should be indissolubly connected with a city which he never entered till within two years of his death. The explanation is simple—he loved it. Thrice he chose it, twice to live and once to die there, and there his holy body rests to-day. From the first the devotion of the people to St. Antony was overwhelming,—indeed it speedily became even embarrassing! And as

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those can testify who in our own day have the privilege of being present in Padua at his feast, the Miracle-worker, after seven centuries, is a real living personality to the countless thousands who flock to his tomb. He is "*Il Santo*" to-day throughout the whole of the Veneto—"The Saint" whom it is unnecessary even to name! It is to the Saint that citizens, peasants, and pilgrims (quite literally) sob out their troubles, whisper their joys and confide their difficulties. His tomb, perhaps the most beautiful in Italy, is actually hung with the *ex-voti* which, quite regardless of decorative effect, St. Antony's clients attach to the marble walls; from the silver heart and the framed photograph to crutches, and a pair of little rough shoes! He lives in the heart of the Paduans to-day as literally as he did when he raised their dead and healed their sick. His tomb, go when one will, at any hour of any day, is never deserted. Great rough men will lean against it with closed eyes, their big toil-stained hands spread out upon the marble which shuts in the body of *Il Santo*, tears stealing down their cheeks, until they are pushed on to make way for others eager to take their place. St. Antony's Feast at Padua is an overwhelming triumph, which must be seen to be understood, and which conveys with extraordinary power the conviction of the objective reality of the Communion of Saints. To watch the crowding thousands for whom it is the great day of the year must surely encourage those who are inclined to lose heart at the present critical condition of Italy.

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Anarchist processions may march through her great cities, bearing unashamed the banner inscribed: "Neither God nor King;"[1] Freemasonry and Socialism may prepare to do their worst; but against the cult of Antony of Padua not even that of Francisco Ferrer shall prevail!

Padua in 1229, says Rolandino, was enjoying "an unaccustomed peace"; and welcomed eagerly the Friar-Apostle who was probably making his Provincial visitation. This ancient city, one of the three oldest in Italy, with its chequered history of nearly nine centuries, plays so important a part in the final years of St. Antony's life that we shall do well to try to understand something of its political status in the thirteenth century. For we must never forget that though in many cases we have lost important details of the lives of our Friar Saints, they were some of them of national importance, and many of them helped to make history. St. Dominic, St. Bonaventure, St. Pius V, St. John Capistran, the Saint-King Louis of France,—such names as these, and others besides are written for all time across the archives of many nations. We are perhaps too apt to think of St. Antony as a beautiful, but rather indistinct figure in an ancient fresco, surrounded by a radiant indefinite halo of tradition and miracle; or as a slightly unreal, almost legendary person like those solemn painted figures stiff in gorgeous mosaic which we see in the glorious Byzantine Churches of Ravenna and Venice, instead of as a man of intensely strong personality, whose

[1] "*Ne Dio, ne Piemonte*" (Florence, 16 Oct., 1910).

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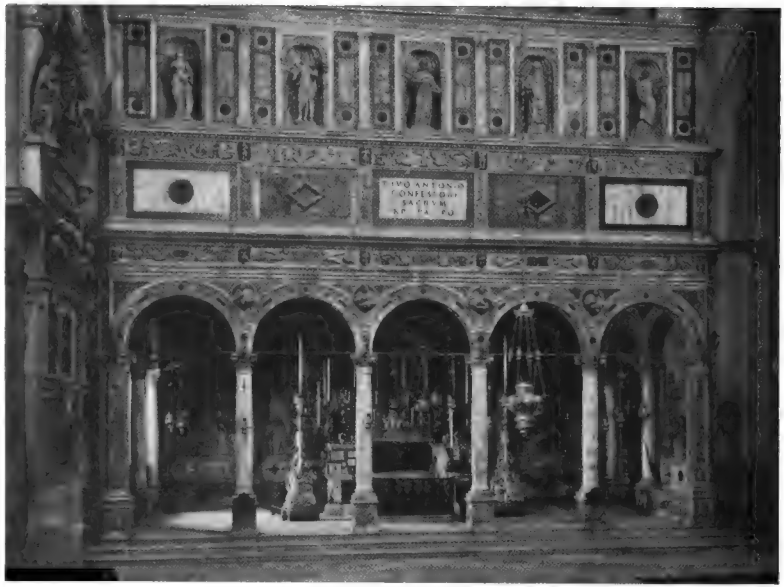

Photo: Alinari.

CHAPEL AND SHRINE OF ST. ANTONY, IN THE BASILICA DEL SANTO, PADUA.

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character was informed by an irrepressible and virile energy! For this energy had its origin in the quenchless enthusiasm of the idealist, and as its motive power the passionate longing to serve Almighty God through the Franciscan Order. Though he certainly was never concerned with national politics we shall better appreciate the position filled by this sweetest of Saints if we glance briefly at the contemporary history of his adopted country.

When Pope Leo III, on Christmas Day, 800, crowned Charlemagne at Rome, the government of Italy was about to be divided between Pope and Emperor. Bologna, Ravenna, Umbria, and Rome were the Papal States, while Tuscany and all the country to the north formed part of the Empire. But the great towns, such as Florence, Pisa, Mantua, and Milan were self-governing, and only as feudal vassals acknowledged the Emperor's sway. Such rising republics as Genoa and Venice were practically independent. In Charlemagne's day the Holy Roman Empire was a vast tract extending from Brittany to Vienna, and to the Emperor was committed the suzerainty over the greater part of Italy. In 850 France became a separate kingdom. In the thirteenth century the empire comprised Germany (as far as the Oder, but not Prussia), Belgium, Holland, the greater part of Austria with Vienna, Hungary, Switzerland and Burgundy, including Avignon, Lyon, and the Rhône valley.

Calabria, Sicily, and Naples had been added (by a royal marriage) to the Emperor's domains, but on the distinct understanding that there should be no

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attempt to unite these provinces with those in the north, for the Papal States lay between. It is evident, then, that the temporal power and possessions of the Pope were to a certain extent dependent on the good faith of the Emperor.

In St. Antony's day Frederic II, a man of unusual gifts, unbridled passions, and unrestrained ambition, ruled over the Empire, and was causing great scandal throughout Christendom. Gregory IX, who became Pope in 1227 (the nephew of Pope Innocent III, who had placed Frederic on the throne) had twice excommunicated him, first for refusing, contrary to his oath, to undertake a crusade to Palestine, and later for concluding a most shameful peace with the Saracens. Frederic, enraged, invaded the Papal States from the south, and succeeded more than once in driving the Pope out of Rome, whither he did not return till 1230. After this disgraceful outrage the Emperor, making a pretended submission, revenged himself (1229-30) by letting loose upon Verona and the Veneto a distant relation of his own, that "tiger in human form," Ezzelino da Romano, whose barbarities are still spoken of in the country with bated breath. For Italy, always a hotbed of party-politics and intrigue, was then torn by the rival factions of Guelf and Ghibelline — roughly speaking, the Papal party and that of the empire. To place a Ghibelline prince to rule over Guelfs, and so touch the Pope through his people, was, to Frederic II, a sheer delight. Ezzelino came to Verona in the same year as Antony came to Padua, and the "unusual peace" of 1229 must have given place

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swiftly to gloom, for the cities were neighbours, and sisters. Verona's peril was Padua's danger, and though the latter city was not attacked during the Saint's life-time, the danger, as we shall see, was imminent.

St. Antony lived, then, in troublous days. Italy was as ever divided against herself; the Catharist heresy was rampant; the Holy Father was persecuted; and even in the new Franciscan Order discussions were arising. Lawlessness and indifference prevailed everywhere; and though the horrors of the fourteenth century were not yet, when the Pope was driven out of Italy and a Papal legate flayed alive in the streets of Florence,[1] men's hearts already were failing them for fear, and the love, even of the faithful, was growing cold.

Above this gloomy sea of trouble the Friar Saints of the thirteenth century shine like stars, and chief among them Antony, *Sidus Hispaniæ*. On his arrival in Padua he took up his abode at the Monastery of Sta. Maria Maggiore[2] presented to the friars, with its small church by the Bishop, Jacopo Corrado, and "there he gave himself up assiduously to the task of preaching". "But though his body lived on earth with his brethren his soul dwelt in Heaven."

The terrible disease[3] of which he died by this

[1] 1378.

[2] The chapel of the "Madonna Mora," with its enormously thick walls, adjoining St. Antony's chapel in the present Basilica (which was built over its site) is the only remaining portion of this church.

[3] Dropsy.

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time seriously affected his health, which was quite unfit to stand the strain of continual sermons, long hours spent in the confessional, and of frequent journeys on foot to the neighbouring towns and villages. To the last hour of his life nothing would induce him to accept any modification of the severe Rule for the ease of the "little ass,"[1] as St. Francis had styled his suffering body. He worked to the end, even adding to his present labours that of writing his first volume of sermons (*Sermones Dominicales*),[2] besides preaching daily throughout Lent, 1230.

Legend tells us that while in Padua he was the spiritual director of Blessed Helen Enselmini, a lady of noble family in the city who was certainly at that time a Poor Clare in the convent at Arcella, just outside the gates. Basing his story perhaps on a few words in a lesson for her Feast, Fra Mariano of Florence, O.F.M. (the enemy of Savonarola), writing 250 years later, has not scrupled to build up the legend of a spiritual connexion resembling in degree that between St. Francis and St. Clare. There is absolutely no foundation for this, nor do we certainly know that St. Antony even visited Arcella, till he came there to die, though it is natural and probable. An earlier biographer of the fifteenth century, who chronicles the lives both of St. Antony and Blessed Helen[3] makes not the least reference in either case to the other.[4]

[1] Asinello.

[2] An important critic fixes the writing of these sermons at Limoges, 1226.

[3] She is buried in Sta. Sophia, the oldest church in Padua.

[4] Sicco Polentone.

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We are on surer ground with regard to St. Antony's connexion with the Third Order. The penitential confraternity of *Colombini* which he founded was, almost certainly, a congregation of Tertiaries. It was important, say the city records, and very numerous. The members built a special church—Our Lady of the Dove. They wore a long ash-coloured tunic, and were girt with the Franciscan cord, "such as the Saint wore". Like all the Friar Saints, Antony was aware of the importance of the Third Order, and of the extraordinary power for good which such an organized body might be, and he continually urged his penitents and converts to enter it.

Soon after Easter, 1230, he travelled to Assisi; May 25 was fixed for the Translation of the relics of St. Francis from St. George's Church, where miracle was already succeeding miracle, to the beautiful partly finished Basilica just built by Brother Elias at the command of the Pope,—the present church of San Francesco. What is now known as the Lower Church was then ready; the Provincials and many Cardinals were assembling; and Pope Gregory himself had promised to preside. After the Translation a General Chapter was to be held. But on May 22, three days before the date fixed, Brother Elias persuaded the civic authorities of Assisi to help him to remove the relics secretly, and hide them in a safe place, lest, said he, they should be stolen by one of the neighbouring towns!

Though the Feast of Translation was actually held on May 25,—for every one had assembled,

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though the Pope was unable to be present; though the magnificent ceremonies as far as possible were carried out, the high-handed act of Brother Elias was looked upon by all as a sacrilege and profanation, and anger against him waxed hot. He was not even at that time Minister-General, John Parenti having been elected at the General Chapter of 1227.

It is impossible here to give even a brief sketch of this extraordinary man's career. This, however, may be said: he has found no biographer to give us his own side of the many controversies in which he involved not only himself, but the whole Order. A man of unusual gifts and high administrative ability, chosen by St. Francis as his Vicar, Elias, while possessing in a curious degree the confidence and esteem of the Poverello, was privately convinced of the impossibility of putting the original Rule, as the Order developed, into literal practice. "His ideal was to make the Friars Minor a powerful and disciplined Order: powerful in order to resist their enemies . . . disciplined because [their] rapid development imperatively demanded it. That which Francis willed to accomplish solely by charity, humility, and poverty, Elias hoped to bring about by energy and common sense." [1]

Much has been written as to the relations between Antony and Elias. In reality before the General Chapter of 1230 they had never come into collision. At this Chapter, which immediately followed the "Translation," three questions were most

[1] Lepitre, p. 118.

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hotly debated (for Elias had a considerable following, and party feeling ran high)—(1) the scandal of the Translation, (2) the exact force of the Will left by St. Francis, (3) the election of Provincials. The first was referred directly to the Pope, as was eventually the second, though upon this there was a stormy discussion, each one speaking for himself, and unwilling, we are told, to listen even to St. Antony. Finally seven delegates, with the Minister-General John Parenti at their head and St. Antony second, were chosen to visit Rome, and personally to refer the question to the Holy Father. When the Provincials were elected St. Antony begged to be discharged from his office in order that he might devote himself wholly to preaching, for which in his humility he felt greater aptitude than for government. The Minister-General not only granted his request, but allowed him to choose his own abode. Antony, says the "Legenda Prima," chose Padua, "because of the faith of its people, of his love for them, and of their devotion to the Order".[1]

But before he could return—for the last time—to the beloved city, he went to Rome. The questions submitted to Pope Gregory IX were perhaps the most important in Franciscan annals. Was the Will of St. Francis, made on his death-bed, binding

[1] The story of the personal quarrel between Antony and Elias (in the presence of the Pope!) after which the former was excommunicated (and even scourged!) by the latter's order, is absolutely apocryphal. Elias, as a matter of fact, was now banished to a distant convent to do penance for his fault, "letting his hair and beard grow".

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by Rule on the Order? Could the lofty ideal of absolute poverty be observed as the *Poverello* had desired? Gregory, the friend of St. Francis and of his Order, replied to the first in the negative; and as to the second, decided that in order to make it possible to observe the Rule the friars should choose a third person [1] to receive the money bestowed by their benefactors, whose representative he should be juridically, and not theirs.

This question, the beginning of the sad story of dissension in the Order, is touched upon here because there have not been wanting learned writers to declare that St. Antony was the chief champion of the original Rule left by St. Francis as opposed to Elias, the head of the "relaxing" party; while others state exactly the contrary. On this point there is no doubt at all. Putting aside the question on its own merits, and that of the attitude of Elias, which it is impossible here to discuss, it is clear that while St. Antony was never in any sense of the party of Elias, he was equally opposed to those who, in their obstinate determination to adhere strictly to the letter of the Rule, in defiance of the Pope, formed later on the schism of the *Zelanti*. He stood, with all the noblest sons of St. Francis, midway between the two. Perfectly aware that the Pontifical decision could over-rule the will of any founder, he accepted with the whole body of loyal Franciscans the modified Rule confirmed by Gregory IX as the true Friars Minor have continued to do ever since.

[1] "Nuntius."

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It must be remembered that Antony was at that time one of the most learned men in the Order. Educated at Coimbra, the close friend of Thomas Gallo, first Franciscan Lector in Theology, and, as we shall see, the first Franciscan orator, this great Saint "had been attracted to the Order by his desire of martyrdom, and if he remained in it after renouncing this heroic hope, if he became in all things a humble Religious, we must not rank him with simple ignorant friars like Brother Giles, or Bernard of Quintavalle".[1] He looked upon the whole matter with a more enlightened gaze than that of an uneducated Religious, however holy. "He must have understood that without departing from the Founder's spirit it was useful and even necessary to modify the Rule in some points . . . on account of the extraordinary development of the Franciscan Family."[2] What was possible for the few chosen first companions of the *Poverello* was manifestly impossible for a growing Order now numbered by thousands. It had become necessary to merge the Ideal in the Actual. That Antony fully realized this is proved (if we accept as fact that he was Provincial of Emilia, 1227-30) by two Papal bulls (1227) confirming the gift by the Bishop of Vicenza, of a church and convent at Bassano to the Friars Minor, which must in his official capacity have passed through Antony's hands. The same thing may be said of the convent at Padua. Even supposing the Saint was not Provincial he certainly ac-

[1] Lepitre, p. 129. [2] Dal Gal, pp. 189-90.

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cepted these acts without protest. "This is the truth," says an eminent writer[1] of the same Order, "and we state it simply to confirm the fact that St. Antony was never opposed to the modification introduced into the Rule by the celebrated Pontifical Bull '*Quo elongati*'. In this he was guided solely by good sense and prudence, and not by any desire of relaxation."

Meanwhile our Saint had been preaching at Rome with marvellous results. "Learned men," says Rigauld, "were astonished to find that so acute a spirit, so eloquent an orator, could measure out his words with such admirable discretion. . . . His words drew back to the truth those who had fallen into error, roused sinners to repentance, and excited the good to do still better, so that no one failed to receive benefit." Pope Gregory, who was much attracted by him, and deeply impressed by the consummate knowledge of Scripture of which his sermons were the evidence, gave him the name of "Ark of the Covenant". Before he left the Eternal City the Cardinal-Bishop of Ostia (afterwards Pope Alexander IV) earnestly begged him to undertake seriously the writing of those sermons which were converting Italy, and this he promised to do.

So for the second time, Antony journeyed to Padua.

[1] Dal Gal, 190.

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CHAPTER VI.

(1230–1231.)

"PRÆDICATOR EGREGIE."

In considering the last months of St. Antony's life at Padua we have emerged from the mists of legend and hypothesis, and are in the clear light of history. On returning to the city in the autumn of 1230 he set himself at once to the task of writing down his sermons on the Saints: "*Sermones in Festivitatibus Sanctorum;*" and this great work occupied him almost entirely throughout the winter. Sorely as he needed rest he pitilessly spurred his flagging energies, his body enfeebled by mortal sickness, to even greater exertion. The effect of his stay in Padua may be traced even to-day in the archives of the city. We think of St. Antony chiefly as a miracle-worker and a great preacher. He was this, and even more—he was a social reformer and true patriot, who pointed out fearlessly to his fellow-citizens the highest destinies of their country. These, he said, were to be achieved by outward peace and interior reform in all classes of society, for just as interior and perhaps hidden disease harms the body far more than the knocks and blows it may receive in daily life, so ceaseless internecine strife was sapping the strength of Italy, so secret sins were corrupting the lives of many outwardly religious.

His nature was one in which the mystical was

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combined with the intensely practical in such a degree that his constant endeavour was to translate the ideal into the actual. Such characters as these, given the proper conditions, move the world.

Padua was a rich and flourishing city, the seat of a recently founded (1222) University. Practically untouched by the Catharist heresy, it was yet the prey of other evils: luxury, extravagance, and display of all sorts. To obtain money for their pleasures the people had recourse to usurers, many of whom were Jews, and all of whom exacted the most exorbitant rates of interest, 28 per cent being general in St. Antony's day, and 50 or even 60 not unusual! Usury, one of the crying evils of the century, had Padua firmly in its grip. So great had the scandal become that the authorities, fearing lest their University should be removed to Vercelli, fixed the rate of interest for students at not more than 20 per cent, after having tried to establish a system—which failed—to bring it down to 5 or 6. Scarcely a family in Padua was not hopelessly in debt, with little prospect of freedom. Nor was this the worst. Debtors unable to pay were liable to be seized, and either banished or imprisoned for life, forfeiting at the same time all their goods. Banks, as we understand them now, were unknown, and the only way the people had of raising money was to apply to the infamous usurers. It is scarcely possible to exaggerate the harm which this deeply rooted evil caused in Europe, and especially in Italy during the Middle Ages.

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With the keen instinct of a true reformer St. Antony warned the Paduans with all his eloquence against the sin of guilty extravagance, the true cause of the evil. He used all his power with the authorities to get the existing law as to the treatment of debtors altered, and as a result a statute was passed (15 March, 1231) which enacted that no citizen who yielded all his goods should henceforth be punished for debt by life-imprisonment or banishment. It is expressly stated therein that this decree was passed at the instance of Blessed Antony.

Legend again surrounds the story of the Saint's intervention with Ezzelino da Romano. This personage had been established by Frederic II as Tyrant of Verona, which declared itself Ghibelline, had succeeded in driving out nearly all the Guelf nobles, and taken prisoner the rest. The vanquished fled for help to Padua, a Guelf city, and the governor had already attempted one unsuccessful expedition to release the prisoners. Ezzelino's name was terrible in the ears of all the inhabitants of the Veneto. His barbarities "excited universal horror in an age when inhumanity towards enemies was as common as fear and revenge could make it. . . . There is hardly an instance in European history of so sanguinary a government existing for more than twenty years."[1]

No one felt safe with so grim a neighbour within striking distance, and one who was moreover the kinsman of the Emperor, their feudal lord. Neither

[1] Hallam, "Europe during the Middle Ages," p. 171, note.

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great nobles nor rich merchants, nor even poor vine-dressers and peasants, held their lives worth an hour's purchase if they fell into the clutches of Ezzelino. Many of the nobility chose to dwell chiefly in Padua, where they built great houses, among whom we may reckon St. Antony's friend, Count Tiso of Camposampiero.

It was necessary to find an ambassador to plead with the tyrant for the release of his prisoners, and St. Antony promised to go. Tradition says:—

When the Saint came into Ezzelino's presence he rebuked him sharply, calling him cruel tyrant and mad dog, and warning him that he was threatened with a terrible punishment from God. Ezzelino was about to have him slain, but as he looked there came from Antony's eyes so terrible a light that the unhappy man felt, he said, as if he were plunged into hell. He knelt at the Saint's feet (as commonly represented in the many fine pictures painted of this scene), promising to let loose the prisoners, and perform whatever penance might be allotted to him. Another tradition tells us how later, to test the Saint's vow of poverty, he sent messengers with rich gifts to Antony, instructing them to kill him immediately if he should accept them.

Such are the legends, the second of which may be utterly dismissed.

The facts are these: Antony did intercede with Ezzelino for the prisoners—a fact which shows both his patriotism and personal courage—but quite unsuccessfully. All he said "availed nothing". The prisoners were not released till 1232, a year after the Saint's death. Results are always subjectively the least important part of any action, and though St.

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Antony was grieved, he had done his duty, and left the rest to God.

The Lent of 1231 was the culminating point of St. Antony's apostolate. He gave himself up entirely to preaching and hearing confessions. But he was not allowed to do this in peace. Once more "the ancient enemy who ceases not to hinder good works," endeavoured to weary him with temptations. Finding this useless, one night at the beginning of Lent the devil "seized him by the throat and wrung it so hard that he was almost strangled". The Saint instantly signed himself with the cross, calling on the Holy Name of Mary to deliver him and put the enemy to flight. "Opening his eyes, he saw the cell full of the most brilliant light, which being intolerable to the enemy of all light he departed in confusion."

For this we have Antony's own testimony, given in his lifetime to another friar, says "Legenda Prima". "Nor can we wonder," adds Rigauld quaintly, "that the devil tried to strangle Antony."

"So anxious were the people to hear him, and so great were the crowds that collected," says Rigauld, "that daily stations had to be erected in all the churches. Very soon, however, the churches were insufficient to contain them, and they were obliged to assemble in the vast meadows and plains which surround the city: there the clergy as well as the people flocked to hear him; they came from all the surrounding towns and villages, and every one tried to secure a place beforehand wherever the sermon was to be preached. Shopkeepers shut their shops,

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and would on no account sell anything whatever until the sermon was over. Then might be seen the most deadly enemies reconciled, prisoners restored to liberty, usury abolished, debts and ransoms paid, and women of evil life giving up their sin."

"These facts . . . spread the fame of the Saint's preaching far and wide: consequently the devotion of the people to him was so great that they counted themselves happy if they could but touch him as he passed. Sometimes he would have been crushed by the crowd in going out or coming in if he had not been protected by a strong escort of young men. Such was the veneration of the people that whoever could contrive to cut off a piece of his habit rejoiced in the conviction that he possessed an invaluable relic." Women, armed with scissors, were the worst offenders! "Again, so great was their desire to listen to his gentle, devout and holy words, that amongst thirty thousand men, and even more, not the slightest sound could be heard when the servant of God was speaking."[1] The Bishop of Padua himself and his clergy came humbly with the rest to hear the Saint. The fame of his preaching seems to have been almost greater than that of his miracles, only one of which at this time can be considered other than legendary,—the cure of a little epileptic girl of four, lame in both feet, whom St. Antony met in her father's arms one day. At the poor man's prayer the Saint made the sign of the cross over the child and gave her his blessing. When they returned home the father put the child down on the ground,

[1] Rigauld.

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when she was able to walk, at first with a crutch, but later, alone.

A very beautiful story of the power of his words must be told in the pathetic language of Rigauld. "About the year 1292 a very old man told one of the friars that he had known Blessed Antony. 'I was a robber by profession,' he said, 'I belonged to a gang of a dozen brigands; we lived in the forest and plundered all the passers-by. But having heard the fame of Blessed Antony's preaching we resolved to go in disguise, the whole twelve of us, on a certain day to hear his sermon, for we could not believe in all that was said about the power of his words. They compared him to a flaming torch, and called him a second Elias. One evening, therefore, when he was to preach, we went to hear him, and no sooner had his burning words sounded in our ears than we began to feel bitter remorse and compunction for our sins and evil deeds, and when the good Father had heard our confessions, one after another, and had given a suitable penance to each, he forbade us positively to return to our former sinful life, promising to those who renounced it eternal life, and to those who returned to it, unspeakable sufferings. Some,' added the old man, 'resumed their criminal life, and very soon perished, as the Saint had foretold, by a most terrible death, but those who remained faithful slept in peace in the Lord. As for myself the Saint had imposed on me the penance of going twelve times in pilgrimage to the tombs of the Apostles, and I am now on my way from Rome for the twelfth time.'"

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What was the secret of Antony's eloquence? Above all, his holy life. He spoke out of the abundance of his heart, which burned with zeal for God, which bled for the wounds of His Church, which ached for the sorrows of others. His fame was certainly increased by the miracles he wrought, but only the magnet of actual personal sanctity could have had the power to draw so many souls. He, the first orator of the Order, is the ideal of a Franciscan apostle.

It may be said at once that St. Antony's sermons cannot be judged from their written records. Quotations and subtle mystical interpretations are so multiplied and interwoven; subjects are so divided and subdivided, and the divisions are so often irrelevant that it is evident the Saint could not have preached from these notes as they stand.[1] In some sermons there is material for two or three of ordinary length. It is most likely that he wrote from memory, adding to his subject such notes and comments as were inspired by his fertile imagination, and his profound knowledge of, and delight in Holy Scripture. For however involved and difficult many of these sermons appear when written, there is no doubt that Antony was the first preacher of his day. His great renown cannot be explained in any other way. He was more than eloquent; he was an orator with the supreme and supernatural gift of touching the hearts of his hearers.

He preached in Italian, though in Padua he

[1] See Appendix.

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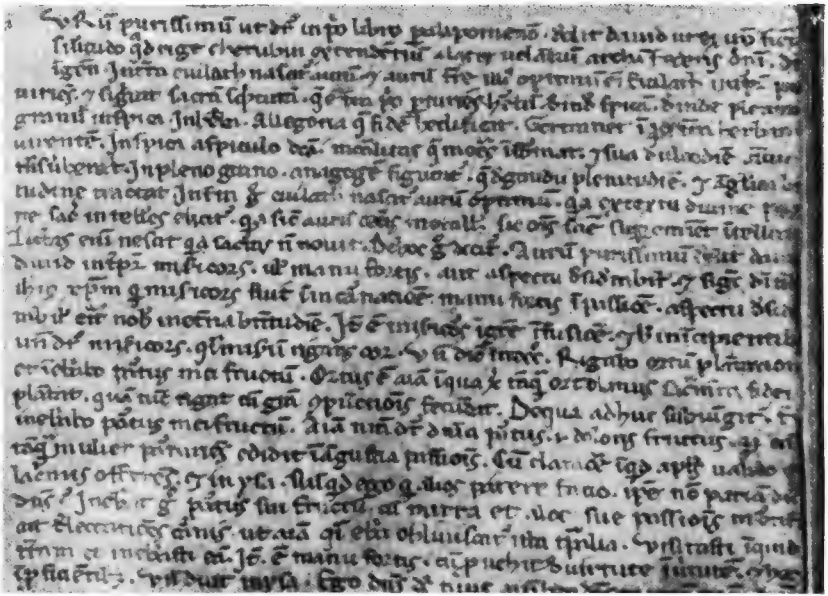

FROM A XIII CENTURY MS. OF ST. ANTONY'S SERMONS, PRESERVED IN THE ANTONIAN LIBRARY. BASILICA DEL SANTO. PADUA.

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might well have done so in Latin, the common language of the educated. We are told of the extraordinary good wrought by his sermons even in those who did not understand him. From his richly stored memory he brought out treasures of Scripture, texts to illustrate almost every sentence.[1] He preached from the whole Bible, which it appears that he almost knew by heart, and it is curious and interesting to note the resemblance between his Sermons and those preached 250 years later by that glorious Son of St. Dominic, Savonarola. Both (e.g.) seem to have taken a genuine delight in tracing the mystic parallels between the Pentateuch and the Gospels. The Fathers were also, but less frequently, quoted by St. Antony. In one sense it is only possible to judge of his extraordinary eloquence by its results, for that much misquoted text: "By their fruits ye shall know them," may aptly be applied to St. Antony's Sermons!

First then and foremost St. Antony was a mystic. To him the Sacramentals of Nature in daily life were as familiar as flowers by the wayside. He had travelled in many lands, he had seen much, and everything he saw was a Sacrament of the Unseen. "In all things fair he beheld Him Who is Most Fair." A true lover of Nature, he walks through the vineyards which surround Padua. "Man's soul is a vine," he tells his hearers, "for to bring forth fruit

[1] Great stress is always laid on this point in St. Antony's preaching, but it was the custom then constantly to interpolate Scripture not only in sermons, and spiritual writings, but even in secular chronicles.

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it must be carefully and ceaselessly cultivated. . . . The vine left to itself becomes the wildest of all growing things. Its wood is useless, except to burn, when it is dry. Thus the man whose soul is destitute of holy thoughts and acts will become the prey of eternal fire. No fruit is equal to that of a well-cultivated vine, and what is comparable to the holiness of a Saint?"[1]

Again: "the devil spreads his web like a spider! The spider begins from the outside and gradually works inwards with thousands of threads, sitting to watch in the centre. . . . The devil does the same: when he wishes to seize a man he very cleverly begins spinning his threads among his bodily senses, but in the heart . . . he weaves more solid threads, more violent temptations . . . for is not the heart the source of life? If a fly—that is, an evil motion, finds consent in the heart the devil immediately assails that man with countless temptations, then envelops him in darkness, lastly clutches him tight, taking away from him all strength and energy to resist."[2]

If St. Antony sometimes strains the comparisons and similes so dear to mediaeval preachers, it must be admitted they are both ingenious and beautiful. "In the lily are to be remarked its properties, its beauty, and its perfume. The first reside in the stalk and root, while the beauty and perfume are found in the flower itself. These three things are the symbol of penitents who have crucified the

[1] Sermon, Fer. 6. Hebdom. II, Quadr.
[2] Sermon in Septuagesima.

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flesh with its desires and affections. . . . Beauty is chastity; perfume, the odour of sanctity. These are the lilies of the field, not of the deserts or gardens. . . . Hermits flourish in the desert, . . . monks stand like flowers in the cloister garth, protected from the great heat of the sun, but the penitent lives and thrives and blossoms in the field of the world." [1]

These words were perhaps addressed to the members of the Third Order, always so dear to St. Antony's heart. He interpreted Nature in a way as new as it was delightful to his hearers. He taught them to see everything sacramentally: a flock of cranes against the evening sky, a swan, a turtle-dove, a pine-tree, a shower of falling leaves served him as a text from which he drew a most practical application. "Be merciful, like the cranes . . . When a flock of these birds makes a long flight one flies in front and . . . with its cries encourages the others. . . . So point out by your good example the way of Truth to those that know it not, help on those who are slow, soothe these who are too hasty . . . bear one another's burdens." [2]

The dove was one of our Saint's favourite similes. "In her simplicity she has a poorer . . . nest than those of other birds. Be as the dove who makes her nest in the deepest cleft of the rock. This cleft, in which the soul should hide itself, is the wound in the side of Jesus Christ. . . . There are many clefts in

[1] Sermon, Dom. XV, post Trin.
[2] Sermon, Dom. IV, post Trin.

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the rock . . . for His immaculate flesh bore many wounds, but the wound in His side leads to the Heart, and it is here He calls the soul, His spouse. . . . The dove makes her nest with little bits of straw collected here and there. . . . What are these scattered fragments which the world despises and treads underfoot? They are the virtues of our Saviour . . . humility, gentleness, poverty, patience, mortification. The world despises them as useless, but it is with these that we shall build our nest, deep in the Rock, in the Heart of Jesus." Riches, he says elsewhere, are like thorns to those who hold them tightly; they not only hinder a man, but pierce and wound him.

But though his beautiful mind and soul are most clearly manifest in quotations such as these, our Saint by no means confined himself to the mystical—if obvious — interpretation of Nature. He was intensely practical. There is no Catholic dogma which St. Antony has not confessed and defended in his sermons. Though none of those which remain to us—not being preached to heretics—are controversial, here and there may be discovered passages which evidently relate to the Catharist heresy, one curious and interesting example,[1] unfortunately too long for quotation, being that of the hypocrite whom he compares to a hyena! In another place he speaks of those who sheltered themselves under the name of Catholic to propagate their false doctrines.

It is, however, in scourging the evils of the day,

[1] Sermon, Dom. VIII, post Trin.

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social and religious, that St. Antony rises to the most impassioned fervour. Pride, avarice, impurity, luxury, all in turn fall under the lash of his fiery tongue! He preaches less to the mind than the heart. How can they, Catholic Christians, the followers of a crucified God, spend their lives, and waste their substance, and even sell their souls for such fleeting pleasure as money and power could bestow, is the question upon which he ceaselessly insists, and forces his hearers to answer. And that they answered it by forsaking their sins and follies we know, for the priests of the city were not sufficient to hear the confessions of those who listened to Blessed Antony's sermons, and he himself often went fasting till evening without realizing it, spending his entire day between the confessional and the pulpit. He appeared in dreams to many who openly declared it, revealing to them their secret faults and urging them to confession. He draws perpetually a strong distinction between those of the faithful who are content, living in the world, merely to follow generally the Will of God (insisting, however, that they shall be detached from earthly things, and be true penitents), and those who have made the supreme sacrifice of self, including religious, and those who, still in the world, are not of it.

Usury, the crying evil of the day, was attacked by our Saint with all his powers. He exhorted his hearers to conquer the lust for wealth which brought them within the clutches of the pitiless money-lenders; to be content with such things as they had; to live rather in poverty than in debt; and on the

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other hand he preached against the usurers and their cold-blooded cruelty like one consumed with Divine fire. He compares them to "*reptilia, quorum non est numerus,*" and to vultures. Some of his burning words may apply to the twentieth as well as to the thirteenth century. "How many rich men of our day are clad in purple—that is in stuffs dyed with the sweat and blood of the poor, because the clothes they wear are woven out of theft, larceny, usury, and illegitimate gain? . . . But the garment dyed with the blood of the poor shall be the prey of eternal flames."[1] "The usurer," he says elsewhere, "is worse than Judas. That traitor, having sold the Blood of his Divine Master, brought back to the priests and princes the thirty pieces he had received, but the usurer guards and keeps his unjust gains."

Against this sin he urges the contrary virtue, almsgiving. The water of a well, he says, is kept sweet and pure by constant use, but if nothing is drawn from it, it becomes stagnant. "Thus when the bucket of almsgiving is let down into the well of riches it makes their possession purer to the conscience and more agreeable to God."

But the evil which he lashes more pitilessly even than usury is the corruption of the Church. Three centuries later Martin Luther, the apostate, once, like St. Antony, clothed in the habit of St. Augustine, but "who had trampled it and his priestly vestments in the mud," cried to the world that the Church was corrupt, that her clergy were degraded, that the

[1] Sermon in Fer. 6, Dom. I, Quadr.

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whole Catholic system was therefore rotten to the core; and that a new Church, a new clergy, a new system were needed. The difference between the methods of a genuine Reformer like St. Antony or St. Bernardine and those of the father of Protestantism are obvious: both see and deplore the evil, but while the first would drive it out, and build up the breaches of the House not made with hands, the other would go outside and build a new house altogether. That the evil was there none can deny, and like St. Catherine of Siena, St. Antony does not spare it. Simony, ambition, avarice and worldly interest, the chief sins of the priesthood, were mercilessly exposed and scourged. Priests who refused to say Mass except for money, who were continually occupied in worldly affairs, especially lawsuits and long processes; religious who used their habit as a cloak for idleness and sin; prelates who bought and sold offices and who abandoned their flocks—to such he showed no mercy. He compares absentee bishops to idols, who have eyes and see not, feet and walk not, "hands to gather money, but not to touch the wounds of Christ. . . . Thus the wolf, who is the devil, scatters the flock, and the thief, who is the heretic, makes off with it". "Tell me, ye priests," he cries again, "is it in the prophets or in the Gospel, in the Epistles of St. Paul or the Rules of St. Benedict and St. Augustine, that you find these disputes, these lawsuits, these intrigues for transitory and perishable things?"[1]

[1] Sermon in Solem. SStorum Apost. Petri et Pauli.

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Many of his sermons, however, are purely theological. One of them,[1] from the text: "Who shall bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the heart," on the last judgment, reads like one of the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius. St. Antony's vivid descriptions, his application of the senses, are in places almost identical with those of the Founder of the Society of Jesus. A modern critic considers this sermon may have inspired the "*Dies Irae*" of Thomas of Celano. "Whither will the sinner flee," he cries; "where will he hide? Flight is impossible; he cannot conceal himself! To appear before God is unbearable terror. '*Et ibunt in supplicium æternum*'."

However, St. Antony's chief claim to honour as a preacher is that, as has been well said,[2] he founded a school of Marianite theology. Though not expressed with scholastic precision, in his Sermons are to be found the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and of the Assumption of Our Lady.[3] He never wearied of declaring her prerogatives: her goodness, her intercessory power, her mercy to all the faithful, the great part she played in the Plan of Redemption. He compares her to a lily, a cedar of Libanus, an olive-tree, a precious vase, a rainbow. Among mediaeval preachers he is perhaps only second to St. Bernard in the force and beauty of his eloquence about Our Lady, the "*Gloriosa Domina*" whom he so faithfully loved and served.

[1] Sermon II, Dom. II, Quadr. [2] By Lepitre, p. 160.
[3] And, it may be added, of Papal Infallibility.

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We cannot do better than conclude this chapter with the prayer attributed to St. Antony, of which the manuscript is preserved at Padua,[1] and which he is believed always to have used.

A PRAYER OF BLESSED ANTONY BEFORE PREACHING.

Light of the World, Infinite God, Father Eternal, Giver of wisdom and knowledge, most holy and ineffable Dispenser of spiritual grace, who hast known all things from the beginning, who hast made darkness and light; guide my hand, and touch my lips that they may be like a sharp sword to set forth Thy Truth. Make, O Lord, my tongue like a swift arrow to declare Thy marvellous works. Send forth, O God, Thy Holy Spirit into my heart that I may perceive, into my mind that I may remember, into my soul that I may meditate. Inspire me to speak with piety, holiness, tenderness, and mercy. Teach, guide, and direct my thoughts and senses from the beginning to the end. May Thy Grace ever help and correct me, and may I be strengthened now with wisdom from on High, for Thy infinite mercy's sake. Amen.

CHAPTER VII.

(1231–1232.)

"ANTONI BEATISSIME."

As the summer of 1231 drew on and the fields and vineyards claimed the labours of the people

[1] Incorporated in a MS. of 1299.

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St. Antony ceased to preach that their work might not be hindered. He knew his end was near. The mortal disease from which he suffered so cruelly was making terrible inroads on his constitution, and his body—"Brother Ass"—which he treated with such relentless severity, was becoming weaker every day. During these last few weeks he longed for solitude and silence such as was impossible in the tiny convent in Padua; he who had so long lived in the eye of the world now desired to go apart for a little space, and prepare for death alone with God. A Paduan nobleman, Count Tiso, possessed large estates at Camposampiero,[1] part of which was thick forest. Here was the solitude of La Verna, of the Carceri, of Montepaolo, Antony's first Italian home. But in this flat country there were no rock-cells in the forest. There was, however, an immense walnut-tree, whose six great branches, a little distance above the ground, spread outwards like a crown from the massive trunk. It was in this tree that Count Tiso himself made, at the Saint's request ("that he might be nearer Heaven"), a cell woven between the branches with osiers and twigs, where, protected from the great heat by the leafy roof above him, and from human eyes by his walls of willow and walnut, he might remain in peace through the long summer days, when the Rule did not compel his presence in Community. A few rough steps led up to it, and a couple of rustic cells were built close by for his companions.

His dying eyes turned continually to the city

[1] Nineteen kilomètres from Padua, on the Bassano road.

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which he loved so well. One evening at the end of May, a fortnight before his death, he walked with his companion to the top of a little hill which overlooked the great plain in which lies Padua in the midst of her vineyards. As he gazed at the ancient city with its beautiful buildings—the new University, the fortress-like Duomo, the vast Benedictine church and monastery of Sta. Giustina, did he see what was one day to dominate them all—the magnificent Basilica with its soaring minarets and cross of seven domes, with its triumphal inscription: "*Gaude felix Padua quæ thesaurum possides*" which in a few years would begin to rise over his own body? Perhaps, for he "began to rejoice exceedingly in spirit, and to break forth in praise of that city, declaring that very soon it would be crowned with honour. By these words he alluded to his own death and happy passing to Heaven."[1]

At noon on Friday, June 13, when St. Antony descended from his leafy cell, and joined his brethren in the little convent close by, at the sound of the bell,[2] as he did daily, he was scarcely able to gain the refectory, "for the Hand of God was heavy upon him". He came in, however—his last voluntary act was obedience—and took his place with the rest, but in a few minutes was seized by an attack of acute and violent pain, his strength gave way, and he could no longer sit upright. He was supported by his brethren, who laid him on a mattress . . . it was all that they could do.

He understood that it was the end. To Brother

[1] Rigauld. [2] "*Vocante eum Campana*".

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Roger, his companion, he said humbly: "If you think well, Brother, I will go to Padua to die, that I may be no charge to the Brothers here". His friend agreed, but the other friars with bitter lamentations begged him to remain with them. Seeing, however, that it was really the Saint's wish to go to Padua, they yielded; a rough ox-cart was prepared, St. Antony was laid in it, and the sorrowful procession started for the city.

It is scarcely possible to imagine what the dying man must have suffered during that long and weary journey. The scorching glare of the sun upon the flat unsheltered road, the thick choking white dust, the clouds of flies, the jolting of the springless cart over the rough stones—all these to a man in sound health would be wearisome and trying, but to one racked with physical pain and sickness, to whom every movement was torture, each grinding revolution of the solid creaking wheels must have been agony such as falls indeed to the lot of the martyrs. It was his *Via Crucis*—nay, the very pain of the Cross, the physical suffering for which he had thirsted when he begged to join the Order, the suffering through which he was to gain his crown. He had it now, all through the blazing June afternoon, and of his bodily anguish, as of the joy and triumph which flooded his soul, we may scarcely dare to think.

They had nearly reached Padua, late in the afternoon, when a friar from St. Mary's who had been sent to inquire after St. Antony met them, and saw instantly that the Saint could not live to reach his

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convent. He begged him to stop at Arcella, close by, where was a convent of Poor Clares served by a few friars in whose house adjoining he could rest. And St. Antony, giving up his last earthly wish with pathetic unselfishness, agreed to remain at Arcella. So they turned off to the left, before they reached the bridge leading into Padua, and the brethren, rushing out to meet them, lifted the Saint from the straw on the rough boards of the ox-cart, and carrying him in, laid him down on a pallet, to die. The cell with its rough brick walls and curiously vaulted roof stands to-day, small and square in a beautiful modern church, as the Portiuncula rises within Our Lady of the Angels; and of all the spots hallowed by the life of Blessed Antony none is so intensely moving as this, where he yielded that beautiful life to God. It is possible—even though a modern altar now fills the greater part—to reconstruct the scene, to gaze upon the very walls on which his dying eyes rested, to tread the stones over which they bore his holy body. Even to-day the little cell seems fragrant with the presence and personality of this sweet Saint and servant of God.

As they laid him down, "exhausted in body but courageous in spirit," he lay quietly for a time, but "the Hand of God grew heavier upon him". So quickly and terribly did his sickness increase that "it soon became evident that his blessed and glorious end was approaching. Having made his Confession, and received the Sacred Body of the Lord in Holy Communion, that this Holy Viaticum might

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accompany him on his way, he began with great devotion the hymn to our Blessed Lady." [1]

O Gloriosa Domina,
Excelsa supra sidera:
Qui te creavit provide,
Lactasti sacro ubere

Quod Eva tristis abstulit,
Tu reddis almo germine:
Intret ut astra flebiles,
Cœli fenestra facta es.

Tu Regis alti janua,
Et porta lucis fulgida:
Vitam datam per Virginem
Gentes redemptæ plaudite.[2]

Thus he invoked "the assistance of the Queen who is exalted above the stars, that she who is the resplendent gate of Heaven, would herself give him entrance there.

"Then raising his eyes he looked fixedly, for some time, on high. As he continued to gaze steadfastly towards Heaven the friars who surrounded him asked him what he saw. He answered: 'I see my Lord'." [3]

Understanding that the end was very close, the Brothers asked him if he would not wish to receive Extreme Unction? As one of them approached,

[1] Rigauld.

[2] This hymn is now only found in its original form in the Dominican Breviary. The Franciscan, which follows the Roman, was revised, and the wording slightly altered, under St. Pius V (1568). It was St. Antony's favourite hymn.

[3] Rigauld.

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with the holy oil, the Saint, looking up at him said —and his words have been interpreted as meaning that he had in that Divine Vision received the Sacrament spiritually: "It is not necessary, Brother, for I have the Unction within my soul. Nevertheless, it is well to receive it, and I will gladly do so." He stretched out his hands to be anointed, then folded them palm to palm upon his breast, and joined in his faint, almost inaudible voice in reciting the Penitential Psalms, "to the end". He did not speak again. The crown was his at last! Half an hour after, "like one quietly falling asleep," his heroic spirit passed away. "His loving, holy soul quitted the body, and conducted by the good Jesus, entered into the joy of his Lord."

It was sunset on Friday, 13 June, 1231. He was only 36, having spent twenty-one years in religion, eleven of which were passed as a Friar Minor. "If it is well to rejoice at the entrance of Antony into Heaven, it is also well to weep for Antony who converted sinners from their evil ways."[1]

The first instinct of the friars was to conceal his death, for they foresaw the struggles that would take place for the possession of his body. Moreover, as Rigauld naïvely explains, "they feared that the people might come in crowds so as to oppress and hinder them". But their precautions were in vain. Whether rumours had gone abroad, spread by some who had met the little procession on

[1] Rigauld.

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its journey to Arcella, or whether it was directly revealed by Almighty God we know not, but almost as soon as the Saint passed away the children of Padua began to run about like sheep, crying: "Our blessed Father is dead! The Saint is dead! St. Antony is dead!" And the whole city was "moved at the cry of the children" into greater tumult than would have been the case at the prospect of a Ghibelline invasion.

Arcella is about half a mile from Padua, which is approached by a bridge crossing the little river Bacchiglione. The Poor Clares very naturally wished to be allowed to bury the body of the Saint in their chapel, that they might thus preserve to themselves the remains of him "whose living bodily presence they had been unable to behold".[1] They sent messages to the Podestà,[2] to the nobles, and religious, begging their help in the matter, and that they would take their part against the friars of St. Mary's who, they knew, would soon arrive to remove St. Antony's body.

Those acquainted with the Italian temperament will be able in a measure to comprehend the scenes which immediately followed, and which appear to us to-day so unseemly, so repellent, and even terrible. "To understand thoroughly," says M. de Kerval,[3] "the scenes of violence and fanaticism which took place at Padua on the occasion of St. Antony's funeral ceremonies we must remember with what blind, and sometimes grotesque passion

[1] "Legenda Prima". [2] Chief magistrate.
[3] "Duæ Vitæ," p. 64 note.

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the people of the Middle Ages sought by any means, good or bad, to procure relics, or to carry off the bodies of saints. We know how the men of Assisi actually posted guards round St. Francis during his last illness in order to be sure of possessing his mortal remains[1] . . . We must not forget that in certain cases motives of rather sordid interest mingled with the exalted devotion of the masses; the presence of famous relics in a city, drawing crowds continually, became, besides a source of blessing, the occasion of solid profit."

On this particular occasion, however, there was no thought of profit, or of anything but fierce, blind devotion to the Saint who had become to the people of Padua emphatically *theirs*. The scenes, on which to-day we look back as disgraceful and even scandalous, were to the Paduans of the thirteenth century most natural and inevitable. And the gulf which lies between St. Antony's time and our own is easily bridged to-day by an Italian crowd!

When the friars arrived from St. Mary's Convent, to carry St. Antony's body into Padua, according to his dying wish at Camposampiero, they found Arcella in a state of siege. It was impossible to approach beyond the bridge, for all the inhabitants of Capodi-

[1] In Germany, in this very year (1231) in which the scenes related in the "Legenda Prima" took place, we find devotees cutting the ears from the body of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, and inflicting on it still more cruel mutilations. On another occasion the Perugians stole outright the body of Blessed Conrad of Offida from the tomb where it was working many miracles (*ibid.*).

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ponte, the suburb between Padua and Arcella on the bank of the river, had risen as one man, and opposed them. The friars went at once to the Bishop, who decided that they alone had the right to possess the Saint's remains, and appealed to the Podestà to uphold this decision.

But when a second attempt was made to reach Arcella the men of Capodiponte, more fiercely determined than ever, declared that they would rather die than allow St. Antony to be taken from them. The happy thought then occurred to the Bishop to suggest that the decision should be left to the Provincial, who was expected immediately in Padua, and as night fell the tumult was momentarily appeased. The house of the friars, close to the Poor Clare convent, was barricaded as strongly as possible—not, needless to say, against the friars of Padua, but against the indiscreet devotion of the crowd outside. And the Poor Clares began bitterly to regret that they had moved in the matter at all.

"In the middle of the night a miraculous event occurred which I may not pass over in silence. At midnight those who wanted to see the body of the Saint thrice broke open the convent doors, with loud outcries and clamour; but stupefied and struck with blindness, they could not once get inside, though the doors were all open."[1]

Next day arrived from Padua and from all the country round crowds of people of all classes, who insisted on being admitted that they might see St. Antony. They brought rosaries and medals with

[1] Rigauld.

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which they touched his body, and those who could not reach him in the press tied them to long poles, which they pushed between their more fortunate friends. It was much the same scene as may be witnessed at Padua on the Feast of the Saint in these days, after the Procession of the Relics. For a whole day the crowd pressed and surged through the little cell, and those were happiest who had been able to touch the body of the Saint themselves.

In Italy, especially during the great heat, burial speedily follows death. Though in St. Antony's case there was no sign of necessity, the Arcella friars decided to follow the custom, and resolved to bury the body temporarily in the Chapel of the Poor Clares, for they did not possess one of their own. But in some mysterious way the rumour spread that *Il Santo* was being removed; the armed crowd again burst the doors and swarmed into the convent chapel, and insisted on the coffin being disinterred, actually striking it before they would leave to make sure they were not being deceived by an empty one. Revolting as these details are, they testify as nothing else could, not only to the powerful influence of St. Antony on the people, but to the mingled religion and fanaticism, idealism and grossness, simplicity and cunning which were—and are—the predominant characteristics of the masses in Italy.

The "Legenda Prima," so meagre hitherto, furnishes on the subject of the Saint's death, and all that followed, the fullest and amplest details, which it is only necessary to summarize. It was probably

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on June 16 that the Provincial arrived, and decided that the Saint's body should be taken to Padua without further delay. The Bishop supported him, and again the Podestà's help was invoked. Preparations were made for a solemn procession, but as it was feared there would be actual fighting on the bridge, the Paduans constructed a bridge of boats, a little way down the river, nearer to Arcella. The men of Capodiponte attacked and destroyed it with axes, and paraded the banks fully armed. Things were again at a standstill. In vain the authorities attempted to take action. This was the 17th. And then another miracle happened. "The Friars . . . fearing a general rising of the whole city, began to call upon God to allay the tumult. And God, who had permitted the disturbance for the greater glory of this Saint and to show that the veneration of the people was not to a coffin, but to a pearl of great price, Himself quieted the tumult, and so changed the dispositions of the citizens that, when the Podestà gave the order, no further opposition was made by the people of the suburb." [1]

The Podestà, in fact, assembled the people in the great council hall, and then commanded the men of Capodiponte to remain that day in Padua, without returning home, under pain of the confiscation of all their goods. And at length they obeyed.

"When the tumult had subsided and the people had calmed down, the Bishop and all his clergy, the Podestà and all the city magistrates, as well as

[1] Rigauld.

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a numerous assemblage of the faithful bearing torches, formed in procession, and with hymns and psalms carried the sacred body to the Friars' Convent at the Church of the Blessed Virgin. Blessed Antony had then been five days dead;[1] and yet, notwithstanding the severe heat of summer, not the slightest odour of death was perceptible; on the contrary, the sacred body exhaled an aromatic perfume, and an odour of sweet ointments, as if to attract all others to run in his footsteps."[2]

So at last he was brought to rest in the church where he had desired to lie. One curious detail is insisted on by the "Legenda Prima". Many of the candles which the people brought to burn in honour of the Saint were so large that they could not be taken into the little church, but had to burn in the square outside. Some were of such incredible size that it required sixteen men to carry them safely, or four oxen to draw them, if laid in a cart. Many were made like candelabras, decorated with garlands of flowers and leaves in white wax; others were like the great wax torches with four and five wicks still used in Venice for the Corpus Christi Procession, and at Padua for St. Antony's Feast. It is interesting to remember that the practice of burning candles in St. Antony's honour dates from the very day of his funeral!

High Mass was sung in the friars' church by the Bishop of Padua, and the Saint's body was at last laid in the tomb, among the prayers and tears of

[1] 13th to 17th inclusive. [2] Rigauld.

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those to whom he had been so true a spiritual Father. It was June 17, 1231. From that day miracles began to take place. Sick and dying were brought to touch his tomb and were healed; while those who could not, for the press, get into the church, were carried as far as the door, and there, under the eyes of the crowd, were suddenly restored to health. Those who implored his help, even at a great distance, never implored in vain. So widespread was the devotion to the Saint's memory and so great the renown of his miracles that pilgrimages were organized to his tomb, to which the people came barefoot, bearing candles. Not only Italians, but Russians, Germans, Hungarians, men of all nations; not only the poor, but nobles and great ladies, clergy and magistrates, took part in these processions, in which walked the Bishop of Padua himself. The University students, we are specially told, were remarkable for their devotion. Nor was the devotion confined to burning candles, for the whole community of St. Mary's was insufficient to hear the confessions of the pilgrims, as had happened during the lifetime of the great Confessor when people flocked to his sermons, and to the tribunal of penitence. His canonization, under these circumstances, was not likely to be delayed, "for all were unanimous in petitioning that the process should be actively taken in hand". The Cardinal-Bishop, appointed to revise the miracles, had reduced their number from fifty to forty-seven. Two people had been raised from the dead; the lame, the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the paralytic, the epileptic,

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Photo: Alinari.

DEATH AND BURIAL OF ST. ANTONY. (FROM A FRESCO BY GIROLAMO DEL SANTO), IN THE SCUOLA DEL SANTO, PADUA.

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—sick of all kinds had been healed; others had been saved in danger, or in temporal difficulties; there was at least one miraculous conversion. We may take a few examples at random, "*si quæris miracula*".

A little girl in Padua, named Eurilia, sent on an errand by her mother, had fallen into one of the deep ditches which lie in all directions between the vineyards, and was taken out of the mud and water dead. After all efforts to restore life had failed—the details are pathetic—her mother prayed that God would restore her child through St. Antony's intercession, promising to place a waxen figure of the little girl on the Saint's tomb if Eurilia was restored. As soon as she had made the vow the child's lips moved, "and by the merits of the Holy Father, she lived again".

A number of people sailing across the Lagoon to Venice were overtaken at the hour of compline by a terrible storm of wind and rain, when near St. George's-in-the-Seaweed.[1] It grew dark, and they no longer knew where they were, so with cries and groans they gave themselves up to despair. A priest on board advised them all to make their confession, which having been done, and absolution received, with one voice they invoked Blessed Antony, beseeching him to deliver them. No sooner was this done than the tempest abated, and the ship sailed on of its own accord—whither they knew not. But a certain light went before them,

[1] The churches on the Lagoon are full of votive pictures to St. Antony, representing such occurrences.

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now all weeping for joy, and the ship following it, they were all brought safely to land, and found themselves at St. Mark's. And when those whom Blessed Antony had saved had reached their haven, immediately the light disappeared.

But it was not only to save life, nor even to restore health, that the Miracle-worker was invoked.

A certain woman named Vita, who had an intense devotion to St. Antony, greatly longed to visit his tomb, but was unable to do so, as she was obliged to scare away a multitude of sparrows from a field of millet, "now whitening to harvest". Coming one day to the field she vowed to St. Antony that if he would keep the sparrows away during her absence she would visit his tomb nine times. As she made the vow "a great flock of the aforesaid birds" flew away, nor was a sparrow seen again in that place.

The simplicity of this story may make us smile, but the act was characteristic of the Saint whose prayer had kept the little servant-girl at Brive safe from the rain.

One celebrated miracle must be quoted. It is represented in bas-relief in St. Antony's chapel, and produced at the time a most profound impression. A certain heretic named Aleardino made a practice of ridiculing the devotion to St. Antony, and of openly declaring his disbelief in the reality of the continual miracles. Speaking one day at table, in the presence of a number of people he asserted that if the glass which he held in his hand should remain

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whole when he dashed it upon the stone floor—as he proceeded to do—he would believe both in the miracles and in the Saint. The glass, which he threw with all his strength, was unbroken, but the massive paving-stone on which it fell was smashed! Astounded and terrified, the now penitent man hastened to the friars, related the miracle, made full confession of his sins, and "henceforth adhering steadfastly to the Faith of Christ, everywhere proclaimed the miracle".

Pope Gregory proceeded solemnly to canonize the Saint at Spoleto, on Whitsunday, 30 May, 1232.[1] In the Cathedral, in the presence of the whole College of Cardinals, and "a crowd of prelates from all parts of the world," the list of miracles was read aloud, and approved by all present. "Then the Sovereign Pontiff, raising his hands to Heaven and invoking with fervour the name of the Blessed Trinity, inscribed the most Blessed Priest of Christ, Antony, in the Catalogue of the Saints, appointing for his Feast the day of his death."

The miracles have not ceased to-day, nor has the love and devotion of the people. To understand how a mediaeval Saint can be still a living, almost visible, personality one must spend the Feast of St. Antony at Padua.

His body did not remain many years in its first

[1] No other Confessor has been so quickly raised to the altars. St. Peter Martyr, O.P., slain in 1252, was also canonized within a year.

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tomb. Almost immediately after his death the present great Basilica—the votive offering of the world—was begun, and in 1263 was sufficiently advanced to make it possible to translate his remains to a resting-place beneath the High Altar. This was done by the Minister-General, St. Bonaventure. When the tomb was opened the body of the Saint was found to be dust, but the tongue, which had been as a sharp sword to pierce the hearts of thousands, still remained as it was in his lifetime. St. Bonaventure took it up, and kissing it with the greatest devotion, cried: "*O lingua benedicta, quæ Dominum semper benedixisti, et alios benedicere fecisti, nunc manifeste apparet quanti meriti extististi apud Deum.*" Many of those present had known St. Antony in his life-time, and all were moved to the greatest devotion. A magnificent reliquary of goldsmiths' work was made for *La Lingua*, to-day the greatest treasure of the Basilica.

In 1310, under the Minister-General Gonsalvo de Vauton, the church being almost finished, the relics of the Saint were placed in a tomb in the middle of the nave.

In 1350 the Papal Legate, Cardinal Guy de Montfort of Limoges, whose life had just been saved by the intercession of St. Antony at Cuges, in Provence, in making a final translation of the body to its present chapel, presented a magnificent silver châsse to enclose all the relics, from which he withdrew several for presentation to other churches, notably a portion of the skull, which in gratitude for his preservation he sent to Cuges, where it is still

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venerated. In 1351 the General Chapter of Lyons ordered the Feast of the Translation of the Relics of St. Antony to be observed on February 15, the anniversary of this occasion.

In 1257 the Paduans had decided that St. Antony should be declared patron of the town, and that every year a sum of 4000 livres should be allowed for the completion of his Basilica. The fabric, much as it stands to-day, was completed about eighty years after the death of the Saint; but the magnificent decorations of the *Cappella del Santo*, where lies St. Antony's body, are of the sixteenth century. It is perhaps the most beautiful, as it is certainly the most famous, shrine in Italy.

A most pathetic, and probably authentic legend of the early fourteenth century tells us that on the day of St. Antony's death his old friend Abbot Thomas Gallo, of Vercelli, who was suffering great pain from a malady of the throat, was sitting alone in his cell. Looking up he saw Brother Antony standing before him, silent, but radiant. The Abbot spoke, but he did not answer. Stretching out his hand he lightly touched his friend's throat, gazed at him for a moment with a face of ineffable joy, and then, uttering a single sentence, turned, and the next moment had disappeared.

The Abbot, in his surprise and delight, scarcely realized that the pain was gone, and that he was completely cured. He rushed from the room, and hastening over the monastery, questioning every one

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whom he met, sought his friend everywhere. But no one had seen Brother Antony, nor could any trace of him be found. The Abbot at last was fain to return to his cell alone, and by degrees the meaning of that single sentence stole into his soul. For St. Antony had said to him—and his face, as he said it, was as the face of an angel—

"I have left my little ass at Padua, and I go in haste to my own country".

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APPENDIX.

A Specimen Sermon of St. Antony of Padua.

Adapted from the original translation of Sermon for the Fourth Sunday in Lent, by Fr. Michael Bihl, O.F.M., from "S. Antonii Patavini, Sermones Dominicales et in Solemnitatibus". Edn., Ant. M. Locatelli (Padua, 1895), pp. 95-106.

(According to the Synopsis (p. 95) the whole could be divided into four sermons: (1) To the preacher; (2) Against sin; (3) About the myrrh-tree; (4) About the five assemblies. But it is really the sketch, or rather skeleton, of one long sermon, abounding in strange and arbitrary etymologies, and mystical deductions.)

Dominica IV in Quadragesima (Fourth Sunday in Lent). *Gospel* (St. John VI. 1-15). Jesus feeding 5000 men with five loaves and two fishes. As Solomon says (Eccles. XI. 1): "*Cast thy bread upon the running waters*," i.e. the people about to die. You, O preacher, give to these men the bread of your sermons.

The Five Loaves = the Five Books of Moses, in which is found the food of the Soul.

I. Sorrow for sin committed.
II. Confession of sin.
III. Humiliation in satisfaction for sin (i.e. Penance).
IV. Zeal for souls in preaching.
V. Sweetness of contemplation in Heaven.

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I. *The First Loaf.* (See Genesis xxxviii. 20.) *Judas sends a goat by his shepherd the Odollamite, to Thamar.*

(*a*) *Judas* = confessing.

(*b*) *Goat* = sin.

(*c*) *Odollamite* = testimony in the water (i.e. tears of compunction).

(*d*) *Thamar* = (1) *amara*, (bitter); (2) *commutata*, (changed); (3) *Palma* (a palm) i.e. (1) = beginners in the spiritual life; (2) = those progressing; (3) = the perfect.

(*e*) So the offspring of Judas and Thamar were (1) Phares, = division (from sin); (2) Zara = Orient (illuminating good works of penitents).

II. *The Second Loaf.* (See Exodus ii. 12.) *Moses buried the Egyptian he had struck down, in the sand.*

(*a*) *Moses* = aquaticus (the man of the water) i.e. tears of contrition.

(*b*) *Egyptian* = mortal sin.

(*c*) *Sand* = confession, where like Moses, the penitent who wishes to hide his sin from God discovers it to the priest.

III. *The Third Loaf.* (See Leviticus i. 16.) *The priests are ordered to throw the crops and feathers of sacrificed birds in the place of ashes, towards the east.*

(*a*) *Crop* = avarice (Job. xviii. 9).

(*b*) *Feathers* = levity of pride (Job. xxxix. 13) and hypocrisy.

(*c*) To be thrown in the place of the *ashes*, i.e. "*thou art dust, and to dust thou shalt return*".

(*d*) *East side* = Eternal life, from which our first parents fell.

IV. *The Fourth Loaf.* (See Numbers xxv. 7, 8.) *Phinees slaying the two sinners.*

(*a*) *Phinees* = the preacher, piercing with

(*b*) *The Sword* = preaching,

(*c*) *The hearts of sinners.*

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V. *The Fifth Loaf.* (See Deuteronomy XXXII. 49.) *Moses ascended Mount Abarim* [Vulgate, *Nebo*] *from the Plains of Moab.*

(*a*) *Moses* = penitent soul.

(*b*) *Plains of Moab* = carnal pleasures.

(*c*) *Abarim* = transition, passage from those pleasures to the holy life of contemplation.

These are the Five Loaves with which Jesus nourished the 5000.

The Two Fishes are the Myrrh-trees, five spans [literally "elbows"] high, growing in Arabia.

(*a*) *Arabia* (= holy), i.e. the Church, in which such

(*b*) *Myrrh* (= penance) can grow.

The Five Spans are again the Five Loaves by which man is raised from earthly things to those of Heaven.

These are the Five [*sic*] brethren of Juda, of whom Jacob (Genesis XLIX. 8) says: "*they shall praise thee, Juda*".

They are:—

(1) *Reuben* = the seeing man (i.e. by contrition), having those seven eyes of which Zacharias (III. 9) speaks: "*In one stone there were seven eyes*".

(*a*) *The first* eye sees the things of the past, to mourn them.

(*b*) *The second* sees future things, to avoid [the evil].

(*c*) *The third* sees prosperous things, that they may not make us proud.

(*d*) *The fourth* sees calamities, that they may not depress us.

(*e*) *The fifth* sees supernal things, that they may have savour for us.

(*f*) *The sixth* sees inferior things, that they may become tasteless to us.

(*g*) *The seventh* sees interior things, that they may please us in God.

(2) *Simeon* = hearing, is the second brother (i.e. the confession of his sins, that God may hear

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him). "*Hear, O Lord, the voice of Juda*" (Deut. XXXIII. 7). "*Thy voice is sounding in my ears; Thy voice is sweet*" (Cant. II. 14).

(3) The third brother to be added is *Levi* = the added one (i.e. satisfaction is to be added to contrition and confession, and the penance must correspond to the fault). "*Worthy fruits of penance*" (Luke III. 8).

(4) *Issachar* = reward (i.e. after Penance there will surely be the Eternal reward, and we shall not be as worthless brands, fit only for the eternal fire).

(5) *Zabulon* = house of strength (i.e. he should dwell in that house of contemplation, together with the simple Jacob, to taste the Heavenly sweetness).

These [again] are the Five Loaves and Two Fishes. The Two Fishes are: (1) the intellect, (2) the memory, with which you must season the Five Books of Moses, to understand, and put them in the treasure of your memory. These Two Fishes, caught in the deep sea, can also symbolize Moses and Peter.

(1) Moses, so called because he was taken out of the water;

(2) Peter, being a fisherman, was elevated to the Apostolate. To him was committed the Church, to Moses the Synagogue.

These two, Church and Synagogue, are Sara and Agar, of whom we read to-day in the Epistle.

(1) *Sara* = coal (i.e. the Church ignited at Pentecost by the Holy Ghost's fiery tongues).

(2) *Agar* (the servant) = solemn (i.e. the solemn legal ceremonies and observances of the Old Testament and Temple). Again:—

(1) *Sara* = Princess (i.e. the inferior reason which has to command the lower senses typified by)

(2) *Agar* = that savage bird, the vulture (i.e. sensuality, which follows after carnal pleasures

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like the vulture after corpses). The son of sensuality persecutes the son of right reason, as the Epistle says (Gal. IV. 29). Therefore it is said also: "*throw out this servant and her son*" (Gen. XXI. 10). The flesh, when well fed, sets itself up against its mistress, and so happens what Solomon says (Prov. XXXIII. 20-21). . . .

(*a*) that "servant," is our recalcitrant body.
(*b*) that "fool" is our soul filled with sensual delight.
(*c*) that "wife" is the habit of sinning.
(*d*) So Agar (i.e. sensuality) becomes the heir of her mistress (i.e. reason). But in order that this Dominion should be broken our Lord nourished 5000 men with Five Loaves and Two Fishes.

Here you also see the connexion with the Introit of to-day's Mass: "*Rejoice, O Jerusalem, and assemble yourselves together*".

Accordingly, Five Assemblies of men have been made.

(1) *The first* was celebrated in Heaven, and there was discord there, because the Angel who had been first, and white, became black. First he was *Lucifer*=bringer of Light; then he became *Tenebrifer*=bringer of darkness. He made great discord among the other "brethren" (i.e. Angels); as in the Angelic Choir he did not begin his Antiphon on the proper low note,[1] but a very high one. He said (Is. XIV. 13, 14) "*I shall ascend to Heaven*" (i.e. make myself equal to God the Father); "*I shall be like the Most High*" (i.e. God the Son). While he was singing so high he fell, irreparably.

(2) *The second* assembly was in [the Garden of] Paradise [i.e. Eden], and here also was dis-

[1] This figure is borrowed from the conventual choir.

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cord, through disobedience, on account of which our first parents were driven forth into exile.

(3) *At the third* assembly [the Last Passover] there was simony. . . . Thus Judas sold the Most Holy, our Saviour; and therefore [went to his own place] (Acts I. 25).

(4) *In the fourth* assembly [the upper room] poverty was wanting when Ananias and Sapphira kept back the price of their field, lying to the Holy One (Acts v. 1-5). So it shall happen to all who have embraced poverty (in a Religious Order) who wish to rebuild Jericho destroyed.

(5) *In the fifth* assembly chastity was wanting, as St. Paul says (1 Cor. v. 5) that some were to be excommunicated on account of sins against that virtue.

But you, who are members of the Church, citizens of the Heavenly Jerusalem, root all vices out of your hearts, in order that you may be of the number of the 5000 who were filled with the Five Loaves and Two Fishes, and that you may be counted among to the elect, through Him Who reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

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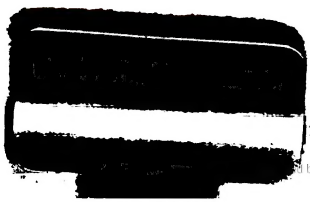

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